The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines.

To Annie

from

A. B. Buckingham

Christmas 1873

Virginia F. Choate.

1937.

TOWN HALL, PADUA.

THE

GIRLHOOD

OF

SHAKESPEARE'S HEROINES;

IN

A SERIES OF TALES,

BY

MARY COWDEN CLARKE,

AUTHOR OF THE CONCORDANCE TO SHAKESPEARE.

"as petty to his ends,
As is the morn-dew on the myrtle leaf
To his grand sea."

Shakespeare.

NEW YORK:
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS,
FOURTH AVENUE AND TWENTY-THIRD STREET.
1873.

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TALE VI.

ISABELLA; THE VOTARESS.

"A thing ensky'd, and sainted;"
Measure for Measure.

All the Vienna world was abroad, and gay, and well dressed, and bent on pleasure; for it was the first of May,—when every Viennese puts on new clothes, and sallies forth, and makes holiday; and the city becomes a scene of colour and animation.

Through the public thoroughfares, the crowd streamed on; rich and poor, high and low, haughty and humble, gentle and simple, the virtuous and the vicious, the nobleman and the tradesman, the lady, the milliner, the man of wealth, the artisan, the honest, the profligate, the wise, the foolish, the sober, the dissipated, the careless, the studious, the indolent, the industrious, the witty, the silly, the insolent, the modest, the proud, the coquette, the house-wife, the flirt, the spendthrift, the miser, the home-lover, and the gad-about; all with one accord, joined the band of idlers, and swelled the throng that poured through the streets that fine May-morning, in holiday trim, and holiday talk, and holiday mirth and laughter, and in the freedom of universal association which holiday pursuit brings about.

For all the groups in this gay crowd, whatever their class, or degree, or habit, or profession, or calling, or ordinary pursuit, had that day but one pursuit, and jostled and elbowed each other in temporary equality

and unanimity; for it was the first of May, and all the Vienna world was abroad, and wending to see the foot-racing on the Prater.

The noble, and the wealthy, for the most part, kept their state, in coaches, or on horseback, surveying the crowd on foot with toleration, or disdain, as the case might be, or with condescending approval, intimating that, as part of the show and stir of the scene, the others were welcome there, in their clean new dresses. The humbler pedestrians looked upon their lofty neighbours with admiration, or with grudging, or with envy, as the case might be, also; according to the several dispositions of the individual gazers in both ranks.

Among the pedestrians, was one couple, who, as they lounged along, were not sparing of their remarks upon the rest, and who uttered them in a loud jeering tone, regardless of being heard, or of giving offence.

The man,—a short, thick-set fellow, with a ferocious moustache, and a cruel eye; a skin that bespoke double daily drink to daily bread; a head held on one side, with an air that cast defiance in the teeth of all who cast eyes on him; a swaggering step, and a general look of brutal ruffianism;—held on his arm a young girl, who was young only in years, for her face had in it that which betokened an age of horrible experiences. There were in her countenance traces of beauty, but they were obscured to a pitying eye by the shadow of vice, by the hues of intemperance, by the lines which wrangling and brawling had left cut in upon the cheek, and round the mouth and eyes; while in the eyes themselves, there would occasionally gleam a wild troubled look, that seemed like conscience betraying its inward struggle, and starting forth involuntarily to claim sympathy and compassion

In her person there was the same confession; recklessness of decorum in dress and bearing, together with a something of shrinking consciousness at times, that seemed to plead for the sense of shame that yet remained. Her voice revealed similar existence of bad, with latent good. It was course and unrestrained in its noisy vulgarity of speech and laugh; but there were moments when its tone would drop to an almost musical softness, and it would tremble and vibrate with genuine womanly emotion.

Now, however, it was raised to its height of repulsive loudness, as she laughed and talked with the ruffian companion on whose arm she hung, humouring his mood of jocularity in sneering at the passers-by, and assisting his invention by many smart sallies of her own.

In the midst of their boisterous mirth, it suddenly received a check, by one of the horses starting from the line of cavalcade, and plunging and rearing violently in their immediate vicinity. So close to them came the animal, and so entirely beyond the controul of his rider was he in his bounds and curvettings, that his hoof struck the girl, before she could get out of his way. She recoiled with a scream of pain; while her companion sprang forward, with an oath, to seize the horse's rein, and to revenge himself on the rider. But the animal dashed past him, and bore his master and himself away from the spot, leaving the other raging and foaming, and pouring forth a volley of curses and vows for vengeance.

"Don't heed it; I'm not much hurt: you'll only get yourself into trouble—let him be;" said the girl with difficulty; for she was struggling to hide the pain she was in.

"Not much hurt!" with another oath; "you might have been killed!"

The girl turned deadly pale, and held her hand to her bosom; but she continued to say she was not much hurt, and kept her other hand upon the man's sleeve to hold him back.

"No, no, not badly hurt;" she said; "only let me lean upon you for a bit, and take me out of the crowd for a minute or two, and I shall be right enough soon."

The man led her up a quiet by-street; while she clung to him, as much, apparently, to detain him by her side, as to use his arm for support.

"Here, sit you down here, Nanni, my girl," said he, as he turned through the gates of a little old church-yard, that was in the by-street; "sit upon one of these mounds, and get your breath, which that scoundrel frightened out of you with his horse's hoofs. I'll see if one arm can't strike as well as four legs, if ever I catch that young jack-anapes!"

"Not here!" said the girl shuddering, and looking round. "I can't sit here. You said just now, I might have been killed; so I might—in that very moment—and have been brought and laid here." She looked round upon the graves; she looked up at the old church tower that reared its grey head towards the sky; she looked up into that sky beyond, and a dark troubled expression settled on her brow. She thought, had she then been summoned to one of those earthly beds, what strange rest or unrest might have been hers.

"Why what a plague's come to the wench!" exclaimed the man, as he watched her disturbed look, and quivering lip, "you're no coward, are you, Nan, to shiver and shake after the danger's over? I know you're too brave a wench for that, or I shouldn't like ye as well as I do! Ugo Branz hates a milk-sop, be it man or woman, with all his body and soul!"

Winding up this manifesto with a few more round oaths, having for aim milk-sops of all kinds, horses and horsemen of all sorts, mankind in general, and himself and his own body and soul in particular, he again demanded to know what a plague was come to the wench.

"O I don't know—nothing:—nothing's come to me—nothing's the matter with me; I'm better now;" said the girl hurriedly. "But what's that—over there—sitting among the graves—all in white? see!"

"I suppose you think it's a ghost! What the devil's come over you?" And this time Ugo Branz invoked condemnation on his eyes and limbs, as well as body and soul.

"A ghost? No; more like an angel!" said she. "It's a child. See how it sits, like a marble image; with its folded hands and drooping head."

"I'll tell you what, my girl," said the man, "if you're going to stay here all day in this mouldy old church-yard, fancying ghosts, and spirits, and angels, and all that sort of rubbish, you may stay here by yourself; for I shan't. I promise you. But if you choose to come along with me, and see the foot-running, like the jolly wench I know you for, generally, why, say the word, and come along, and don't stand moping and fooling here no longer."

"I am a fool: what's the good of moping and thinking?" muttered the girl. "I often tell myself so—no use in thinking—be merry while I can—merry! And so we'll be merry, shall we, Ugo?" she went on in her loud, careless voice, and with her noisy laugh; but both the tone and the laugh were forced and mirthless.

Her companion, however, was not one to detect want of true feeling of any sort, or any where; as long as the semblance of high spirits was near him, he was satisfied; and they soon joined the crowd in the main street again, and went lounging, and idling, and mocking, and jesting on, as they had done before.

They reached the Prater, as the foot-race began. The competitors had just started; and Ugo was soon eagerly engaged in watching them, and in betting with some of the bystanders, on the probable event of the course. The chances were very equal, the men engaged being well matched in strength and activity. They were, for the most part, running-footmen, belonging to the retinue of noblemen of distinction; and were dressed in coloured silk jackets, embroidered in silver. The vivid hues, and richness of their decoration, showed to peculiar advantage in rapid action; which, joined to their well-matched powers, gave additional brilliancy, animation, and interest to the sports. Ugo became more and more excited by the scene; his bets grew more numerous; his shouts to those he abetted, more vehement; his yells to those he disfavoured, more execrative; his oaths more savage, more voluble than ever. As the race concluded, he found himself a victor, by several heavy wagers, and in a state of foaming furious triumph.

In high good humour, still raving and panting, he seized the girl by the arm, and led her to one of the small way-side houses of entertainment that abound near there; taking his seat on one of the benches at a table set outside, for the accommodation of revellers, and calling upon all near him to congratulate him upon his winnings. He did not notice that in passing his arm through hers, the girl had shrunk abruptly, for she strove to repress all evidence of the pain he gave her by touching, even thus casually, the spot where she had received the blow from the horse's hoof; but afterwards, when Ugo had bawled his orders for beer and

schnapps, and, in a fit of brute joviality, snatched the girl in his arms, to give her a sounding kiss, the sudden and rough pressure extorted a scream from her lips, which made him fling her from him, and exclaim with one of his usual curses:—

"What makes you squall, when a man's inclined to be jolly? Are you turned squeamish, or what? Because if you are, by Jove, you're no company for Ugo. There, be off with that white face of yours! Pah, it turns a man's liquor to milk. Be off with it, I say! Let's see no more of it!"

The girl made one attempt to lay her hand upon his arm, and to utter one of her forced laughs; but as her voice faltered, and she could not drive the look of pain from her lips by a feigned smile, he shook her off, and she turned away.

As she arose from her seat on the bench beside him, one of the by-standers said something as if in deprecation of Ugo's treatment of her; which this latter resenting, high words arose, mingled with execrations and threatened blows.

Nanni, again forgetful of herself, would have clung to Ugo, to withhold him from danger, but, with a torrent of oaths, he protested that if she didn't get out of his sight that instant, he'd fell her to the ground, and set his foot on her chalk face.

The girl crept away, giving a free course to the tears of suffering she had till then suppressed; she occasionally put her hand to her bruised side as if it gave her great pain, and more than once raised her other hand to her head, as if full of thoughts that disturbed her with even greater.

She took no heed to wipe away the tears which blurred and smeared her face, but walked on in dogged misery, heedless of appearance or observation; until at length she was beyond the chance of the latter, for she had wandered away from the crowded Prater, and was now in a quiet, unfrequented path down by the river.

The hum of voices, the tread of footsteps, the trample of horses and carriages, the various sounds of a gay and eager crowd, gradully grew fainter, subsiding in the distance; the stillness of Nature softly replaced

them, while the green of the leaves overhead, and of the grass beneath, with the mild blue heavens above, spanning the shining track of the Danube, helped to shed benign influence upon the agitated senses of the sufferer.

The drops fell less thickly from her eyes; the swollen lids drooped less heavily, as her look encountered the cool tranquillity of the scene; but still in her heart there raged the bitter sense of pain, of ill-usage, and the still keener sting of self-abasement and conscious worthlessness.

She flung herself down on the raised path by the way side, where she sat rocking herself to and fro, moodily gazing across the gliding waters into the space beyond, as if confronting the picture her fancy presented her of the outcast thing she was.

As she sat thus, a little footstep approached. A child, of but a few years old, came in sight, walking along the road by itself, looking about, as if somewhat uncertain of its way, yet keeping steadily on without stopping.

Nanni watched the child involuntarily; and as it came near to the spot where she sat, she could not help saying:—

"Why, you're a bit of a thing to be wandering here by yourself. Where are you going to?"

"To Heaven," said the little one.

"Bless the child!" was the startled rejoinder.

"I'm trying to find my way there. There must be some way to get there; and I want to go up—up there—to her!" And the child pointed up into the blue sky with its baby finger.

"Where do you come from?"

"From the church-yard."

Nanni again started. The little creature stood there looking so innocent, so clear, so undarkened by earth's mistakes and guilt, that, for an instant, she might have seemed a newly disembodied spirit, freed from its coverings of fleshly and church-yard clay, coming forth to seek kindred dwelling-place with the angels above. For that instant, Nanni eyed the child, as if she would have scarce been surprised to see a pair of wings spread themselves from its shoulders, and bear it soaring away

from her sight; but in another moment she recognized it for the same she had beheld that morning sitting upon one of the graves, when she was led into the church-yard to recover, by Ugo Branz.

"Do you know the way to Heaven?" resumed the child.

"Not I;" said Nanni with a would-be light laugh; but the old troubled look came into her face.

"Did you ever know it?" said the child; "have you forgotten it?"

"I might have known it, perhaps, one time"—replied the girl hurriedly; "yes, yes, I have forgotten it, I suppose."

"I wish I'd met you before you forgot it," said the child earnestly.

The troubled eye darkened still more, as the girl muttered something that sounded like:—"Would to God you had!"

"I wish I had;" repeated the child; "for I want to get there. They told me she was gone there—and I must go to her." The little one looked about her again; and seemed going to pursue her steady onward way, as before. Suddenly she held out her hand to Nanni, and said:—"Come with me; we'll try and find the way together, shall we?"

The girl burst into a passion of crying. "Too late, too late!" she exclaimed wildly, and beat her hands together, and clenched them among her hair.

The child stood looking in terror at this violence of grief; but yet she found courage, after a pause, to go a little nearer, and repeat, "Do, come and help me to look for it; if we find the way, you won't cry any more; for they told me nobody's sorry there. Come, we shall be so happy there. Let's go. Do; do.

And the little one, in her eagerness to cure misery which she saw, but knew not how to help, was about to put her arm round the neck of the girl, who had bowed her head upon her clasped hands; when the latter, looking suddenly and almost fiercely up, cried:—"I can't—it's no use—too late, I tell you, too late! Go, go; you mock me; go!"

The child, disconcerted, drew back; and after standing a few moments more, vainly watching this wild wretchedness, finding that she did not raise her head, or speak again, the little creature, not without many a hesitating step, and wistful look behind, went upon her way, regretting the poor woman would not come and help in the search.

And still that unhappy woman sat there, with her head upon her clasped hands, her arms flung across her lap, her whole attitude expressive of the despondency that possessed her.

"Fit only to be trodden under foot, it was I—I—who flung myself into the dust and soil!" These were some of the goading thoughts whispered by conscience. "Castaway, abject thing that I am, abandoned, despised, lost,—who was it that first degraded my own being from what it might have been? Had I not been false to myself, could the treachery of others have effected my ruin? 'The way to Heaven?' Ay, I might once have learned it, had I kept, an innocent child, by my father's knee, and hearkened to the good lessons he taught. Had I never wandered from his cottage roof, or suffered myself to listen to words more flattering than his simple praise, I still might have been worthy—still have hoped; but for me there is no hope—none. My feet were led astray once and for ever from the right path—and since then, lower, and lower, and ever lower, till now I am fallen among ruffian companions, insulted, outraged, spurned even by them!"

After remaining thus, some time, crouching listlessly, in a sort of stupor, as if abandoned to the lowly position which best seemed to assort with the condition of abasement in which she beheld herself, her course of thought seemed to take a more active turn, impelling her to rise, and walk forward with a hurried step.

Her eye followed the silvery flowing of the river that ran close by the road she was pursuing; it seemed to lapse gently on, whispering of peace, and repose, and forgetfulness, after a weary struggle of misery. And still the stream seemed to lure her on, and on, promising rest and solace, could she once find courage to throw herself trustingly into its whelming bosom. Yet still she walked on by its side, hesitating; confused by a thousand doubts, fears, and conflicting images of possible gain, and possible evil—of exchanging her present anguish for worse—of the mockery of peace in the reality of eternal unrest. Once take that fatal plunge, from which there is no withdrawal—and what might be the unknown region she should enter. What strange penalty might not her very rashness incur? How was she to secure repose by an act of daring,

of violence? Should it not rather be the prelude to renewed turmoil—perpetuated suffering? She withdrew her eyes from the alluring stream, shuddering; yet not many minutes elapsed, ere her look was again fascinated towards its bright, its soothing flow.

"What else have I left me, but death?" she muttered. "Death now, or death some time hence; what will the interval bring me, should I accept one, but continued evil, added guilt? Some days, and months, or years more of disgrace and outrage, added to those that have already been endured. Why heap up more by that which has been foully achieved? Why increase my own offences, my own weight of injury? If death come now, it will but prevent another period of vicious life—for what course but vice can be mine? A creature branded with sin, steeped in infamy as I, can take no one step in good; all paths of virtue and hope are closed against such as I, by those who have never known the grief of straying; no act of goodness, no office of kindliness, would be accepted at my hand; no deed of charity be tolerated in me; no worthy emotion of mine be believed; no yearning after excellence meet response. What then is left me but to end this course of wrong and wretchedness?

In the energy of her self-communing, and hurried walk, the girl had insensibly traversed a considerable distance along the river side.

As she paused, trying to derive strength, from the very extremity of her despair, for the plunge which was to dare all that might come, so that the past were blotted out, she looked round for an instant, upon the scene of her intended farewell to earth.

It was a wild and desolate spot, remote from any chance of passing footstep. Its gloom and solitude fitted it for her purpose,—was the thought that glanced across the girl's mind; though the next, was one which curled her lip bitterly, as it suggested that there was not a being in the world whose interest in the poor outcast would have sufficed to prompt interference, could her intended deed have been witnessed

"Rejected of man—let me seek mercy of God!" she murmured, turning once again to the river.

But in turning, her eye caught sight of something white that lay

among the rank grass, at a little distance. An impulse, for which she could not have accounted, led her to go and look at it more closely; and she then discovered the child, whom she had twice encountered that morning, lying upon the ground, in a fast sleep.

It seemed tired and foot-sore; for its shoes were dusty and worn—so worn, that one little foot peered through the broken sole, and was slightly stained with blood; the arms lay half extended, with the careless grace and ease of childhood, and the hair fell on either side the face in masses disordered by exercise and weariness; but though there were these traces of fatigue about the little creature, there was still, through all, that look of spotless innocence and calm, which had conveyed to Nanni the impression of something spiritual and unearthly in this child.

Ethereal, holy, pure, apart from the grossness of the material world, this little being seemed to the girl, as she bent over the sleeping face. A celestial expression of softness dwelt upon the features, such as a cherub's might wear; and the transparent beauty of the cheek was almost more than belongs to mortality. Helpless as it lay there, it seemed to embody so powerfully the spirit of purity, that Nanni felt as if she could have knelt and worshipped the presence she involuntarily recognized.

Gently, reverently, she stooped, and drew off the little shoes; then tearing her handkerchief into strips, she bandaged the wounded feet, after having bathed them in some water fetched in the hollow of her hand from the river.

Though she did all this as softly and tenderly as she might, yet during her ministry, the child awoke, sat up, and with outstretched elbows, began rubbing its eyes with the backs of its dimpled hands, while it sleepily watched the operation.

"Thank you! How kind you are! How nicely you have bound up my feet! They were very sore with walking so far. I was very tired, I believe, and fell asleep;" said the child.

"You must have been tired, to have walked such a long way. How far do you live from here?" asked Nanni.

"Oh, a great far away off from here. It must be, for I walked all the morning; returned the child. "But I could'nt find my way, and so I must go home now, and try another day."

"Where is your home?" inquired Nanni.

"I don't know; Oh, in Vienna—I should know the house if I saw it—but I don't know the street;" said the child.

"I'll try and find it for you, if you like;" said Nanni.

"I like;" answered the child with the prompt frankness of her age; at the same time putting her hand with confidence into the hand of the stranger who offered help.

"I'll carry you as far as I can;" said Nanni. "Your feet are too sore to bear much walking." So saying, she raised the child in her arms, and felt a thrill of pleasure, as those other little soft innocent ones curled themselves round her neck.

They went on thus for some time; then the child said:—"You are very good; but you must be tired. Change arms."

Nanni set her down for a moment, and attempted to lift her up on the other side; but she was compelled to desist, and to place her on the ground again, turning very pale, and uttering a stifled groan as she did so.

"What's the matter?" said the child; are you ill?"

"No; I got a hurt this morning—here;" and the girl put her hand upon her bosom; but it's nothing—it don't pain me, when I have you on the other arm. We'll rest a bit; and then I'll take you up again, on that side."

Nanni placed the child on the moss-grown root of a tree that grew near, leaning against the trunk herself, and trying to speak cheerfully with her young companion.

"See what a crowd of branches there is over your head! What a fine resting-place they make for the little birds' nests! And what a thick shelter they give, when the rain comes pattering down!" said she. "Look, too, how well that sprawling root serves you for a seat; and what a pleasant shade there is from the close leaves! O, it's a grand old tree? isn't it?"

But the child didn't answer; her eyes were fixed on Nanni's face, and she was lost in thought.

"Then that was the reason you were crying, when I found you sitting

by the roadside, this morning;" she said at length, ponderingly. "I didn't know you had been hurt—I thought you were sorry."

"I was both sorry and hurt;" said Nanni, in a low tone; and with the old trouble in her look.

"Then why won't you come with me?" returned the child. "I asked you to come and help to try and find the way to Heaven—and there, you know, there's neither pain nor sorrow; they told me so."

"There's no way to Heaven for me;" said Nanni, with a broken voice, that had music in its hopeless lament.

"How do you know?" said the child. "Though I couldn't find it to-day, and was obliged to give it up, and lie down—O, so tired!—yet I mean to try again to-morrow—and if I don't find it then—the next day—and if not then, the next and the next. I'll never stop trying—because I know what a happy place it is—and because my own mamma told me I should come to her there, some day; and so, if I mean to go on trying to find the way, why should't you?"

Poor Nanni only shook her head; but finding the child expected her to speak, asked her some question about her mother, which might serve to divert the child's attention from herself.

"My own dear mamma died;" said the child in her grave earnest way. "She told me she should. She told me that I was not to grieve when she was taken away, and laid in the churchyard, for that she hoped to go to heaven, where, if her little Isabella were very good, and tried hard to be worthy, and keep the right path, she might one day come to her. But I did grieve at first,—I was very sorry to disobey my own mamma,—but I couldn't help it, when she was taken away from me; and I cried very much for a long time, and used to go and sit in the churchyard, near grave where they laid her; but then I remembered that if I went on doing as she had forbidden me—that was not being 'good,' or 'worthy.' And then I remembered what she had said about the 'right path' to Heaven, and what a happy beautiful place she had told me it was; and so I resolved to try and find it, and never to give up the hope of coming to her in Heaven."

"And who takes care of you now your own mamma is gone?" asked

Nanni after a pause, during which the child's thoughtful blue eyes had been fixed upon their kindred skies, and her own had been sadly cast upon the ground.

"When papa went away to the wars, which he was obliged to do two days after my own mamma died," said the child, "he left me in the care of Frau Leerheim; and my brother Claudio too, only he is always away at college."

"I think I know where Madame Leerheim lives; she's a widow-lady, isn't she?" said Nanni. "But her house is quite at the other end of the city—it's a long way indeed; come, hadn't we better be going, or it'll be dark before we can get there." And Nanni would have lifted up the child again, but little Isabella would not hear of being carried any more, protesting that her feet were well now—and that she was not a bit tired, but quite rested, and able to walk on stoutly.

The child said this so firmly, and took Nanni's hand so composedly, and walked on with so decided a step, rather seeming to lead, than to be led—that the girl, although the grown-up person, submitted unconsciously to the guidance of the little creature, as to that of a superior intelligence.

Indeed, it was remarkable, that throughout, this had been the tone of their intercourse. The child seemed to possess an influence, powerful, but involuntary and unconscious,—on either part,—upon the young woman. From the momentary awe which the first sight of the little mourner among the graves had awakened, to the interest inspired by the sleeping child,—an interest sufficient to withdraw her from a fatal purpose,—the impression upon Nanni had been uniform; she could not help regarding her as something sacred, and commanding reverence—almost, worship.

When she had tended the wounded feet, it was less as a woman relieving a poor little wayfarer, than as a devotee yielding pious service; when she had offered to convey her home, it was less a grown person proposing to protect and succor a wandering child, than a faithful attendant too happy if duty find acceptance. When the woman addressed the child, there was the same thing observable; deference, respect, tacit avowal of self inferiority in every gesture and inflection of voice. It was the instinctive homage paid by lost innocence to its visible image in the person of that pure child.

There was a feeling of security—of safety, which Nanni felt from the presence of the child, ever since it had been the means of rescuing her from her meditated destruction. She hardly knew how it was that her intent had been frustrated, but she felt that it was gone; that she had no design of resuming it; and that with its departure was associated the little creature by her side, who had taken its place, and whose presence inspired strange comfort.

They had reached the suburbs of the city, and were making their way through the low miserable houses that straggled on either side of the way, leading into Vienna; when Nanni perceived that the little Isabella limped as she walked, in spite of all her efforts not to seem tired or footsore.

"I wish you would let me carry you," said Nanni.

"No, oh no;" said Isabella. "I would rather not be carried; but I should like to sit down and rest; and then I could walk on again, very well."

Nanni looked about her with a disturbed look; and then seemed to debate some point with herself. It came to a decision, by her muttering:—"I ought not to take her there—nor I would not—but she must have rest and food; yes, yes, she must."

So concluding, she turned down among some houses that stood on their right, at one of which—a small low-roofed one, near to a much larger one,—she stopped, and taking a key out of her pocket, unlocked the door, and led the way in.

They entered at once into a kind of parlor; though of mean appearance, with sanded floor, checked window-curtains, and table and chairs of commonest wood.

Two of the latter Nanni speedily made into a kind of couch, upon which she spread her shawl, and a folded quilt, which she fetched from an inner room; and then she placed the child carefully on these temporary cushions, to rest at full length. Then she bathed and bandaged the little feet afresh, touching them with a light soft hand,—once, pressing her cheek tenderly against them; and then she arose from the kneeling posture she had taken while doing this, and went to a cupboard at the

opposite side of the room, whence she brought some bread, which she cut into slips, and an egg, which she beat up with a little wine and sugar and then she set the whole on a small table, which she brought close beside Isabella's couch, and begged her to eat.

"And you are going to have some with me?" said the child. "How nice this is! And what a comfortable sofa you have made me! And what a snug room this is? Is this your house?"

"My house? Yes, yes, never mind—don't think about that.—Hush!" The girl started up, trembled, listened; then ran to the door by which they had entered, and hastily fastened it.

The next instant a voice was heard outside, saying:—"Nanni, let me in! I want to speak to you! Let me in, I say."

It was a woman's voice, but peculiarly disagreeable; it was harsh and grating, yet with a whine of cajolery that was still more repulsive; it was authoritative, yet wheedling; loud, yet fawning.

"You can't come in, Mrs. Ov——" the girl checked herself in the name, and added, "I can't let you in, now."

"What, you're not alone, my girl?" said the voice, with a laugh, the most discordant, and unlike a laugh, that can be conceived.

"No;" replied Nanni, glancing anxiously at Isabella, and hurriedly putting her finger on her lip, in token that she should keep silence.

"That's another affair;" rejoined the voice with a second horrible chuckle, which dwindled off, as the speaker seemed to retreat from the door, and go away.

Nanni heaved a deep sigh of relief, though she still trembled, and looked pale.

"What woman was that?" whispered the child.

"Hush! Don't ask—pray don't ask—anything about her—anything about me."

"Well, I won't ask about her, if you don't wish it," said little Isabella soothingly, for she could see that the girl was much agitated; "but I hope you won't tell me not to ask about you—for I want to know your name, that I may think of you, and know who it is that has been so kind and good to me."

"No, no,—pray,—my name is nothing;—and yet, yes, for that very reason—if you wish it, dear,"—and the girl diffidently faltered out the last word, as if she had no right to say it, but could not resist the pleasure it gave her to do so.

"I do wish it, indeed;" said the child.

"Then it is Anna—Nanni;—they call me Nanni;" said the girl.

"Dear kind Nanni, come and sit here by me—no, not on this side—come round to the other."

The girl did not understand the child's meaning, but in obedience to her signal, took her seat on the right hand; when Isabella, raising herself upon her knees on the couch, threw her arms round Nanni's neck, and hugged her affectionately, and said:—"Thank you, thank you, dear Nanni, for all your kindness to me!"

As the childish arms twined around, and the little body strained against her, and the fresh rosy lips were pressed to her cheek in hearty true caresses, the tears gushed from the girl's eyes.

"Do I hurt you, dear Nanni? I thought it was the other side that was bruised, or I would not have pressed so hard."

"It is not that—you don't hurt me—you do me good—you make me happier than I ever expected to be again—dear, blessed, little creature—dear little angel"—she repeated, as she ventured timidly to return the embraces that were being lavished on her.

"Do I do you good? I am glad of that—you have been very good to me; you have done me good;" said the child.

"Good? Have I been permitted to do good?" was the thought that thrilled through the heart of the castaway; while the nearest approach to a gracious feeling which had swelled that heart for many a day, now caused it to throb with grateful emotion towards Him who had vouchsafed the permission.

"But I must not keep you here," said Nanni, rousing herself from this trance; "your friends will be uneasy; the night is coming on: Frau von Leerheim will be alarmed at your being so long away, and will wonder what is become of you." Nanni again did unconscious good, in thus proposing Isabella's departure. She was not aware how unself-

ishly, how disinterestedly, how heroically she was acting, in thus hastening to deprive her dwelling of the only image of brightness that had illumined it for years. It was as if a gloom, beyond the dusk of evening, had settled upon the room, when that fair child stepped out from its threshold. Purity and peace withdrew their light, and left within the place, the shadows of its old haunters,—depravity, sin, pollution.

But though she acted upon that right impulse, which prompted her to take back the child, instead of yielding to one which might have urged her to detain it longer by her side, while at the same time unaware that she had acted from any principle at all, yet she felt the full force of the pain it cost her to part with this interesting little being, when the moment came for separation.

They entered the street where Nanni guessed that the widow Leerheim lived. The child pointed out the house, and was running towards the door, when the girl said rapidly: "Bid me goodbye now, dear; I can't go in—I musn't stay—say goodnight now."

She caught the child's hands in hers, and covered them with kisses, while Isabella said in the simple nightly words she had been taught by her dead mother: "Goodnight! God bless you!" And then Nanni turned suddenly, hurried from the spot, and was soon lost amid the darkness, which was now deepening upon the city.

But that night, when the darkness had yielded to the rising moon, and her beams fell upon a certain small casement in the low-roofed house, there was one sat at the casement, who breathed an unwonted prayer and thanksgiving, for that she had been spared the crowning sin of self-destruction; for that an act of grace had been permitted and accepted at her unworthy hands; and for that a blessing from the lips of spotless purity had been granted to rest upon her outcast head.

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Frau Leerheim was what is generally called a well-meaning woman. She was so well-meaning, that she contented herself with meaning to do well, instead of doing well; and her friends, when they could find nothing of any consequence to praise in her well-doing, gave her all the more

credit for well-meaning, finding that that was the great end of her life, at which she constantly stopt short. She was passive, when others were eager; she was indifferent when others were all anxiety; she was inert, when others were active—but then she was so well-meaning.

She would smile, when an answer was required; she would bend her head, when an assertion was made; she would shrug her shoulders, when a question was asked, which proved that she was uncommonly sweet-tempered, and very well-meaning.

She would say, when anything distressing occurred: "Dear me, what a pity! can't anything be done to relieve the sufferers?" When an act of injustice was committed, she would exclaim: "Is it possible? Oughtn't this to be seen into, or reformed, or punished?" If she heard of wrong or disaster, she would pathetically remark: "But really now, they should take means to prevent this happening again!"

What a kind-hearted woman! And how extremely well-meaning!

Being so sweet-tempered, and kind-hearted, and particularly well-meaning, she was of course the most fit person in the world to have the charge of children; and accordingly, when the father of Claudio and Isabella was left a widower, and was compelled immediately after to quit Vienna to join the regiment of which he was colonel, he was persuaded by his friends, that he could not possibly find a more proper person to take care of his motherless children during his probably long absence than Frau Leerheim, who was a widow-lady of genteel birth, but of somewhat reduced circumstances, and therefore likely to undertake the charge willingly, for a suitable stipend.

The arrangement was accordingly made; Claudio, the boy, having Madame Leerheim's house as a home whenever his vacations at college made him need one; and Isabella, the little girl, remaining at the widow-lady's constantly, but subject to little controul or discipline there; the mistress being too mild and well-meaning to exert much authority over the child, "who of course liked to do as it chose, poor thing," and the servants availing themselves of their mistress's example by never tending or watching the child too closely.

The consequence was that the young Isabella went and came pretty

much as she liked; roaming about the house, which was spacious, at her own will; peeping into the large lonely rooms, peopling them with her own fancies; looking at the grim family portraits that hung by the walls, or at the old-fashioned furniture that lurked in corners; wandering about hither and thither, at her own hours, and in her own company only.

There was slight chance of the child meeting any restriction in her freedom; for Frau Leerheim, since her husband's death, had confined herself mostly to one apartment, and had contented herself with saying of the rest of the house: "The servants will see that the other rooms are set to rights, as much as they require; one room is quite enough for me now; but there's no need for me to move into a smaller house; it will do as well as another; all houses are the same to me, now."

Thus it came, that when Isabella's ramblings led her beyond the large lonely rooms, and beyond the walls of the house, and out of doors, even as far as the churchyard where her mother's grave was, their extent was still unnoted; for she generally came back about meal-time—and so that Frau Leerheim saw her in her usual place at table, she was quite satisfied as to the general whereabout of the child.

But on the day when Isabella's fancy to seek her mother in Heaven led her to stray so far, and when the dinner hour passed, and the afternoon collation hour passed, and still she did not return, Frau Leerheim said: "I wonder where that child can be! I wonder she don't come home! I wonder they take her out for so long a walk. Fritz," added she to the lad, who was the only one left of the staff of footmen she had formerly kept, "ask Bertha which of the maids it was who took the child out for so long a walk: it was very thoughtless, whoever it was; but servants are so thoughtless. There certainly ought to be some way invented of making servant girls less giddy; they should be taught better."

But when she heard that no one had taken the child abroad: that Isabella had gone out by herself, she exclaimed: "O, but really now; they should not allow that child to go out by herself; she might get into mischief; it's positively too careless and neglectful of them. Tell them

so below, Fritz. And Fritz! Be sure and let me know the instant the child does return; for I don't know what I should do if any harm were to come to it. What would her poor father say!"

And when, late in the evening, Fritz, obedient to his lady's wish, informed her that the little girl had come home, very tired from having lost her way, and was now in the act of being combed, and washed, and made neat to come into Madame's room—Madame said with the slightest possible curl of the mouth (it might be a smile, it might be a yawn):—

"Poor little thing! I'm so glad she's come safe home! But if she's tired, poor thing. don't let her come to me this evening; tell Bertha to have her undressed, and put to bed at once; it's a pity to bring her here to-night. when she's so tired—and sleepy, no doubt—and oh yes, hungry too, I dare say;—let Bertha give her some fruit and bread, or something. before she's put to bed. I hope they'll see that she's made comfortable, poor thing!"

'They' was a favourite word with Frau Leerheim. It was so convenient a compromise with her conscience. It was so accommodating a recipient for her own share of responsibility. It offered so safe a prop for any onus that suddenly required shifting from her own shoulders. It served a double purpose—it possessed a dual virtue. It acted at once as offender and reformer. It might bear blame when she had occasion to say:—"But really they should not, &c., &c., &c.;" or prove a source of expected rectifying and amendment when she said:—"But why don't they, &c., &c., &c." No wonder that 'they' was a word which found favor with this well-meaning lady.

The next day, Frau Leerheim met her young charge at breakfast.

"And so you lost your way yesterday, did you, Isabella? Poor child! But how came they to let you go out so far by yourself? That was a sad mistake! What would papa say, if he knew you went wandering away so far by yourself? That mustn't happen again, must it?"

"I wanted to find my way to Heaven, and I'm afraid its a great way off!" said Isabella.

"La child!" exclaimed the widow-lady.

"Is it?" said the child.

"Is it what?" said Frau Leerheim, in a somewhat more peevish tone than her usual vapid amiability allowed her to use.

"Is it a great way off?" said Isabella.

"What a strange child you are—what questions you do ask;" said the Frau, looking about her perplexedly, as if in search of somebody, who she thought really should make this child less strange, and tell her not to ask such absurd questions.

"It must be;" said the child; "for nobody seems to know whereabouts it is. When I asked Bertha once, where it was, she said it didn't signify where, since I should never get there she was certain, as long as I let my hair get rumpled, or tore my frock, or was naughty; and when I told her I meant to be neat and good, and therefore I hoped she'd tell me where it was, that I might try and find it, she said, 'How you worry, miss Bella; it's out of your reach, I promise you—it's up there—up beyond the blue sky—ever so far!' Still, I don't think it can be so far, that I shall never find it if I try." said Isabella, thoughtfully; "for my own mamma told me I should come to her there one day."

"I can't conceive why people put such notions into children's heads, for my part;" muttered Frau Leerheim. "They really shouldn't; it's positively quite wrong—absolutely wicked—to fill their poor little heads with such fancies, making them discontented, and tiresome, and troublesome."

"What do yo think about it, ma'am?" asked Isabella, after a pause, during which she had been considering, in her quiet grave manner.

"About what, child?" said the Frau.

"About Heaven—about where it is;" said Isabella.

"I don't think at all about it;" said the widow lady, hastily; "that is," added she, correcting herself—"I think a great deal about it, of course; we should all think constantly about Heaven, you know; but really, I can't say—I don't know—you're such a little child—you are too young in my opinion, to have any explanation—or to understand any explanation at present; you must positively wait, my dear Isabella,

till you are old enough to have these things explained to you, which you will have, of course, you know, some day or other, I dare say, if your teachers do their duty by you, and if your papa provides proper teachers for you, which of course he will do, one of these days, I make no doubt."

Then, seeing Isabella look as if she were again going to ask some question, Frau Leerheim added:—"Suppose you go to Bertha, now, Isabella, my dear; and see if she won't show you some pictures, or some toys, or something or other, that will amuse you. I shouldn't wonder at all, if she have some; so run away, there's a dear child: good bye, good bye;" she said, as she kissed her hand languidly to the child, and nodded her out of the room, half smiling, half gaping at her, as Isabella obediently disappeared.

But instead of going to Bertha, the child went up into the lonely suite of chambers above, where she loitered about among the old pictures in their worm-eaten frames, antique commodes, and spiral-legged tables, and carved chairs, and dim Venetian mirrors; her thoughts rambling among subjects as odd, obscure, crooked, and puzzling, as these objects that surrounded her.

She sat down at one of the windows, pondering and brooding over so much that perplexed her. Questions presented themselves to her mind, that crossed and recrossed each other in perpetual recurrence, and seemed to find no hope of answer. Why did every one seem so anxious to change the subject when she inquired about Heaven? Her mother had told her it was more beautiful, more peaceful, than any place on earth, and yet they all seemed to shrink from its mention. Why was this? Why did Madame Leerheim find her a strange child, and almost always send her away, as if she tired her? Why did Bertha think her 'worrying?' Why was her papa obliged to be away, with the army, when she wished him so much to be able to come home, and talk to her, and tell her the reason of so much that she could not understand? Why could not Claudio be more at home, or have longer holidays, or his vacations come oftener round? Why would not the young woman—Nanni, who had been so kind to her in other things, come into the house with her when she brought her home? Why did she not like

her to notice her own house, or to ask about the woman who came to the door with that ugly voice and unpleasant laugh? How had she come by that hurt? And was the bruise any better this morning? She wished she could know.

All these, and twenty such questions, flitted through the busy little brain, as Isabella sat, in one of the deep-recessed windows, leaning her elbow upon the sill, and looking straight before her, without seeing any thing, so deeply absorbed was she in her train of thought. But at length, glancing through the open casement at which she sat, her eyes rested upon a certain quiet shady plot of ground, which, though surrounded by a high wall, could, from that particular upper window be overlooked.

This green, retired spot, had peculiar charms for the solitary child. She would often sit in her favorite window-seat, watching the shadows of the spreading trees upon the grass beneath, or as they fell across the trim-kept gravel-walks; she would note the twinkling of the leaves as they strirred and played in the light morning or evening air; she would look at their massive repose, as they rested like painted foliage beneath the breathless heat of noon; she would often creep up here, and watch their silvery stillness as they lay placid and beautiful in the beams of the moon, when her own due sleeping-hour had been protracted by the forgetfulness of the damsel appointed, or rather, allowed, to attend upon her. She would take delight in looking upon this only glimpse of verdant Nature, that was to be seen from the town house where she lived. She would fancy herself running upon the grass, or sitting beneath the fine old trees; and thus enjoy the pleasures of a garden, so dear to childish heart, as well as she might, whilst sitting in a dreary great house by herself. And yet it was a sober, stately sort of garden, with as little of the ordinary gaiety and garishness that makes a pleasure-ground, as could be; it had flew flowers, or shrubs, or fruit-trees. There were lofty cedars; towering pines; lindens, oaks, acacias, gnarled-trunked chesnuts; and an avenue of tall formal poplars. It was a solemn, almost a gloomy-looking garden; and yet to the eyes of that lonely child it was a green bower of delight; for to her, the trees were clothed with ever-

new beauty, and the place itself seemed replete with loveliness and peace. She saw the cedars and pines tufted with bright velvet edges, when the breath of spring gave them vigor to put forth their young shoots; she saw the delicate pensile blossoms of the linden, where the bees clung, making their sweet busy music, which she could fancy she heard; she saw the cheerful glossy boughs of the chesnuts, with their brisk leaves, so pointed yet so broad; she saw the slender forms of the poplars bending and waving beneath the pressure of the wind, when it chanced to be high.

There were tender vernal buds—the flush luxuriance of summer leaves—the gorgeous hues of autumnal foliage;—and even in the sullen season of winter, there were the graceful lines and tracery of bare leafless branches, to occupy her thoughts in turn with images of beauty.

There was another charm too, which this garden had for the young eyes that watched it. It was a convent-garden; and Isabella found a strange mysterious pleasure in seeing those dark figures moving to and fro, with sombre flowing garments, and black veils, and bent heads, and measured pace, beneath and among the trees. So earnestly did she observe them, that it was not long before she had formed a sort of individual acquaintance with these quiet nuns, and had even gone so far as to select some among them for whom she felt a preference.

There was one nun, an especial favorite with her; one, for whose appearance she watched with eagerness, and whom, when she did appear, the child followed in every movement with peculiar interest.

This nun seemed to share her little observer's fondness for the garden; for rarely did she come there, without some implement in her hand, with which she sedulously applied herself to trim and cut the edges of the lawn, to clip and prune stray twigs, or tend the few flowers that were sparingly allowed to adorn the place.

In the performance of these occupations, would Isabella accompany her in attentive vigil, day after day, and hour by hour, whenever, and as long as these duties brought the nun to that part of the convent-garden which could be seen from the child's post of observation; and thus it happened that an affection, unknown by its object, but strong in the

breast of its youthful cherisher, had sprung up towards the one with whom there had never been a single word, or even look, exchanged.

Faith in remote good; worship of excellence beheld from afar; steadfast belief in that which was intangible, yet visible to her soul's sight; firm in adherence to that which she instinctively discerned as right, and pure, and true, though as yet unproved to her mortal sense—seemed innate principles in this young creature.

As yet she wandered on alone, with no one to guide her, no one to help her in solving the questions her struggling perceptions prompted; but a friend was at hand, who was to lead her through all her difficulties, to assist her on her dimly-seen track, and to possess her, firmly and enduringly, of the means to win the grand aim of existence.

On the morning in question, when Isabella, awakening from her reverie, cast her eyes towards the convent-garden, hoping to behold her favorite nun, they sparkled with delight when she saw her already there, training the branches of some ivy that were flaunting idly away from the stem of a tree, round which they should have clung for the support they needed.

As the child wistfully looked towards the figure she knew so well, and watched that serenely pensive face, wherein she read so much of gentleness, and consideration, and benignant patience, that promised willing response to all she sought to know, to all the tenderness she yearned to ask and bestow, her longing to hold nearer communion with this person so loved, though so unknown, took possession of her with strength sufficient to urge her starting up, sliding off the recessed window-seat, and making her way through the suite of deserted rooms, as if bent on some resolved purpose.

"Frau Leerheim said papa would not approve of my wandering so far again; but the convent is not far—I know the large iron gate—it is only in the next street. I'll go there, and peep in the gate, and—perhaps—it may lead into the garden—I may perhaps see my nun herself there."

Thinking thus, Isabella soon was loitering near the tall grated portal, peering in, with an eager look, and a heart beating with expectation.

It beat with something like fear, when a very starch lay-sister, the portress, approached, and asked her if she wanted any thing or any body.

The tone in which this was said, however, reassured the child; and she said:—"If you please, ma'am, I should like very much to walk in your beautiful garden, if you think I could be allowed."

"It isn't my garden, my dear, I am only sister Gretchen; call me so, and not 'ma'am,' when you speak to me. But I'll try and get Reverend mother's leave—that's the abbess here, my dear,—for you to walk in the convent garden, if you wish it. I don't see that little innocent feet like yours can do the place any harm—and I dare say Reverend mother will think so too. Walk in, my dear, and I'll ask her for you."

The starch-looking but kindly-spoken portress trotted away; but soon returned with the expected permission.

"You're neighbour Leerheim's little girl—or rather, the little girl that lives at her house, an't you?" said the portress, with the inquisitiveness and talkativeness of her vocation, both official and spiritual.

Isabella answered in the affirmative, and told her her name, as sister Gretchen led the way to the garden, the gate of which she threw open, saying:—"I thought you were; Reverend mother says she'll trust to your word, if you promise that you will do no mischief."

"I promise;" said Isabella, in her simple grave manner.

"Very well, my dear; and I shall be glad to let you in and out, as often as you please to come and go; so now run about and amuse yourself, to your little heart's content."

Isabella, left to herself, yet felt no temptation to give way to the usual childish course of running off her exhilaration and joy at beholding herself actually within the place she had so long admired at a distance. Happy as she was at being thus at liberty to roam freely among these beautiful trees, and along this verdant turf, yet there was still a paramount delight which she expected to enjoy here. She looked about her eagerly, trusting to discover her favorite nun in some of the paths, or near to some of the flower-beds.

She knew not well how to pursue the direction which should bring her to that part of the garden where she had so recently beheld her training the ivy; but she went on, in the hope that she might come to it.

At length, just as she was turning into a long walk skirted by a sloping turf, surmounted by scattered trees, and ending in the avenue of poplars she knew so well, she descried her whom she sought, still engaged with the same employment But she was surrounded by a group of other nuns, who were watching her work, and chatting with her; and the child involuntarily checked her steps, and after a moment's pause, withdrew behind a tree, whence she could observe them, herself unseen. It was some undefined wish of speaking to her first by herself; something of conscious preference, and the sanctity of secretly cherished attachment, which demanded an unwitnessed meeting, and which bade the child thus linger, in the hope of addressing her alone.

Her hope was fulfilled; the sisters, one by one, dropped off, leaving Isabella free to accost her beloved nun as she wished. Yet now that she had the opportunity so long and so much desired, she hesitated, and hung back timidly; with a still more beating heart than when she had stood anxiously peering in at the gate, or when she had asked admittance, fearing denial. For love, given to an unconscious object, inspiring both anxiety and fear, is more powerful than either; and the child, approaching the presence of one thus beloved, glowed and faltered and trembled.—agitated, yet happy.

She fixed her eyes on those of the nun, as she turned in surprise, at seeing a strange little girl so close to her.—for Isabella had crept to her side unperceived,—and putting her hand softly into that which belonged to the gentle being whose face had so often filled her with comfort, and confidence, and trust, she drew the hand against her fluttering heart, and said:—"Will you love Isabella? She loves you very dearly."

"And who is Isabella?" said the nun; "though she is a winning little creature, I see. But how comes she to love me, I wonder? I have never seen her before, that I know of."

"But she has seen you, though, very often;" said the child, pointing

upwards with a smile, that yet did not take from the earnest gravity of her manner.

She seemed a seraph, such as this nun, accustomed to contemplate images of holiness and angelic guardianship, might almost fancy permitted to look down upon human aspiration and devotion; one moment's glance skyward, revealed the passing fancy; but the next, she was assured of that little one's claim to mere mortal childhood, by the matter-of-fact way in which it pointed out an upper window of a high house not far off, saying:—"There, from that window up there, I could see you every day, and watch you gardening, and learn to love you. And I longed so much to come to you—and love you near—and ask you to love me—and to let me be with you often; and so—and so—I am come."

The gentle nun did not belie the impression her distant appearance had produced upon the watching child. She was as good as she seemed; as fit to inspire confidence; as fit to win love and esteem; as capable of giving counsel and instruction; as wise, as kind, as tolerant, as benign, as her every look bespoke her. Willingly did she accept her self-elected disciple; joyfully did she welcome the devotion of this young heart; and earnestly did she devote herself in return to its guidance, its support.

Yet with the sedate manner which distinguished her,—and which was perhaps the one that had first attracted Isabella's regard, as being one so akin to her own characteristic of placid gravity,—sister Aloysia appointed certain restrictions to their intercourse. She gave the child leave to come to her daily; but she fixed the hour at which she was to come, and the period of her stay.

"Reverend mother grants me three hours in the garden every morning," said she; "during which I am to use the best of my poor skill in tending and training these shrubs and plants. During those hours, my child, you may come here; and Isabella may prove to me that she is pleased to be with me, by never arriving later than nine o'clock, as she may prove her punctuality and her wish to please me in return, by coming precisely at that hour, and never lingering here beyond noon."

And now the old lonely life was over; no longer was the solitary child condemned to wander listlessly from room to room, snatching distant glimpses of comfort—gazing wistfully for some reliance, some re-

sponse; now her full heart met full comprehension; now her enquiring spirit had help and satisfaction.

Day after day found her punctually at the side of sister Aloysia for the entire space of the allotted three hours; day after day, her hands learned dexterity in aiding the nun in her gardening duties; day after day, her thinking faculties gained clearness and intelligence. Her mind and her body reaped benefit alike, in these daily three hours spent in the open air, and in the good nun's converse. Her energies, moral, mental, and physical, acquired strength and power beneath these propitious influences.

Isabella's dreaming infancy was succeeded by a happy childhood, fostered by a pure, a wise, a tender monitress. The baby visions of seeking Heaven by actual roads and active walking, perplexed her no more; the 'right path' was patiently and reverently explained to her to mean, not an earthly highway, but an earthly course through besetting temptations, corruption, vicious example,—through trial, sorrow, and trouble,—through avoided evil, through maintained virtue. She was taught to hope that she might still find that path, though not as she had once supposed, in her innocent, matter-of-fact, unaided notion; she was taught how she might keep its way, undeviating; she was taught how she might abide by its unerring direction; she was taught how she might keep in view its gloried end—how attain its immortal goal.

Her aspirations thus indulged, yet directed aright; her young imaginings given full scope, yet presented with a due aim; her fervor regulated while it was fostered—the fanciful visionary became the earnest enthusiast; the young child's vague desire became a rational hope, a firm belief, a steadfast faith, none the less spiritual that it was now based upon a knowledge of the truth. It was sublimated; from an impulse it had become a creed. And the little creature who had almost more than mortal aspect, beaming with her innocent trust in an imaginary Heaven, now that her soul had been taught to behold its veritable immortal hope looked indeed little less than one of the angels.

While still a child, Isabella was once taken, by Frau Leerheim, in a friend's carriage, for a drive on the Prater. When there, the widow-

lady got out and walked for a while beneath the trees, taking the child with her.

Suddenly, Isabella broke away from Madame Leerheim's side, and ran towards two young women she saw at a little distance.

"Nanni, dear Nanni! I'm so glad I've found you at last;" she said to one of them; "I've often thought about you, and wished to see you again. Don't you remember me? I'm Isabella, the little girl you were so kind to, that day, when I lost my way."

Nanni was about to fling her arms about the child, and give vent to her delight at seeing her again; but Madame Leerheim coming up at the instant, Nanni drew back, glancing at the widow's indignant face, who exclaimed:—

"Why, Isabella, my dear, how came you to be talking to such people, —what can you know of them? Come away, directly."

"She was very kind to me once, I have never seen her since—I must thank her—I can't leave Nanni before I tell her how often I've thought of her kindness to me that day;" said Isabella, holding to the skirt of Nanni's gown; for she shrank away from her as if she were going, in obedience to the angry looks which Madame Leerheim continued to cast upon her.

"Oh dear, this is very naughty, and disobedient of you, Isabella;—I insist upon it, you come away from that person directly, and return with me to the carriage. What a terrible thing it is, that children will be so headstrong, and won't mind what they're told, or do any thing they're bid—Oh dear me—tyeh! tyeh! tyeh!" concluded the widow Leerheim; her climax of distress and perplexity finding vent in those half articulate sounds formed by the tongue against the roof of the mouth, imperfectly represented by the above words.

"Go, go, dear;" whispered Nanni hurriedly; "best go."

Isabella looked for a moment fixedly into the girl's face, and seeing how earnest she was, let go her hold; when Nanni, snatching an end of ribbon, that hung from the child's hat, to her lips, turned away, and, with her companion, the other young woman, walked quickly out of sight among the trees.

For a few minutes, Madame Leerheim remained fixed to the spot in speechless indignation—but when they were again seated in the carriage, her vexation found vent in murmurs.

"Where can you have picked up such acquaintances, I can't think, for my part;" said she. "Such a disgrace! such a degradation! I really don't know what I should have done, had any of my acquaintances seen us near them, much less speaking to them! How on earth did you ever come to meet with such creatures, child?"

"Creatures, ma'am! I only met one of them, before; I only knew her, Nanni—she was very kind to me. I don't know the other young woman. But what makes you call them creatures, as if you despised them? Nanni is good and kind; she bound up my feet, and carried me, though she was in pain; and gave me food, and took care of me, home."

"No matter for that, you oughtn't to thank her;" said Madame Leerheim hastily; "you can't thank her—you mustn't thank her."

"Not thank her!" exclaimed Isabella; "I thought we should be grateful for kindness. Why not thank her?"

"Dear me, child, how you always tease, with your 'I thought this,' and 'I thought that;' your 'why this,' and your 'why not the other.' I tell you, you oughtn't to thank her—you oughtn't to be seen with her; no need of thanks—she's not fit to be thanked—not fit for you to be seen talking to."

"Not fit! How not fit?" said Isabella, in her grave reflecting way.

"Upon my word, I've no patience with you, child;" said Madame Leerheim,—which was true enough—for she was impatient at her own incapacity to evade or answer Isabella's questioning; "of course she's not fit—she's a woman of pleasure, a—I won't say what she is."

"Pleasure! She seems to me to be the most unhappy woman I ever met with;" said Isabella half aloud, thinking of what she had once beheld of Nanni's vehement grief.

"So she ought to be;" said the widow, with a toss of her head.

"Ought to be! *Ought* any one to be unhappy?"

"Let me tell you, child," said Frau Leerheim snappishly, for it was

wonderful how tart her usual insipid tone could be, on occasion; "let me tell you, it's very rude to echo people when they speak. You ought to know, Isabella, that it's the height of ill-breeding to repeat people's words, when they're talking to you. I'm sure the miserable wretch isn't worth talking about at all. One oughtn't to sully one's lips by even mentioning such creatures."

Isabella was about to reply, "Miserable! if they're miserable, oughtn't we to talk about them, and see if we can't help them"—but she remembered, just in time, that this would be the 'repeating people's words' for which she had so lately been rebuked; so she simply said:—"I don't understand."

"To be sure you don't, child; how should you understand such things, at your age?" said Madame Leerheim, with a triumphant air, as if she had now quite settled the question; and she leaned back complacently among the cushions of the carriage, thinking how well she was fulfilling her charge, by keeping the child in blissful ignorance that such shocking things as crime and vice were in the world.

Isabella meantime thought that she would, on the morrow, refer to sister Aloysia the many questions she had to ask, secure of explanation, however numerous, or however perplexing they might be; and she was just wondering how it happened that she should never yet have mentioned her former adventure with Nanni, to her friend the nun, when, as she looked from the carriage-window, she caught sight of Nanni turning down one of the by-alleys that threaded the suburbs. She noted the spot, and determined to return to it at some future time; for her true heart longed to pay some of the debt of kindness it acknowledged, and she could not but perceive that however inexplicably the young woman seemed to acquiesce in the propriety of their not being seen together, she yet took evident delight in her presence. And then the child recalled that look—the only one approaching to joy that had lighted Nanni's face while she was with her; the look with which the poor creature had said:—"you do me good, you make me happier than I ever expected to be again." And she resolved that she would come again, and try to do her good, and to make her happy, in return for what she had done for her.

It was not many hours, ere she had an opportunity of carrying her purpose into effect. In the afternoon, Frau Leerheim, lulled by the combined effects of a morning drive through the air, and of a more than hearty dinner,—for the widow's well-meaning amounted to well-doing in the matter of eating—slept soundly in her easy chair; and Isabella, knowing from experience that these naps of the good lady were not only profound but prolonged, determined to go and endeavor to find out Nanni at once.

She remembered as she went, how anxious Frau Leerheim had been that she should not be seen with Nanni; and she rejoiced that this quiet opportunity had offered for seeking the young woman, without risk of infringing the widow lady's wishes.

"She did not seem to object to my being with her, but to my being seen with her;" thought the little girl. "That was strange! If Nanni were really a bad companion for me, Madame Leerheim would have told me so, I should think; but she seemed not to mind my associating with her; only not to like my being seen with her. I'll take care. She lives in a very out of the way part of the town, and no one will see me go to her. I would not go, if I thought it wrong; but I know Nanni is good and kind—for she was so to me."

Isabella had no difficulty in finding the turning she had marked Nanni taking in the morning; and she soon reached the large house, which she remembered stood near to the small low-roofed one, where she had been taken by Nanni on the first evening of their meeting.

She stepped to the door and was about to tap at it; but it yielded even to the light push of her childish hand; and she stood upon the threshold.

So noiseless was her entrance, that it was merely the effect of variation in the light, caused by the opening door, which made Nanni look up from the abstracted attitude in which she sat, lost in thought; and then she saw the fair image of the child, standing in the afternoon sunbeams which streamed through the doorway. Flooded thus, in the rich gold and purple effulgence, and with her own clear cheek and brow, ethereal bearing, and purity of look, the little girl had even more than

her usual appearance of spiritual beauty; she seemed unearthly, immaterial—a thing of glory and beatitude, sent in pity to mortal frailty.

"I have found you out, Nanni; I am come to see you, to thank you—I could not thank you this morning and tell you how often I have thought of you since that day you were so kind to me."

At the sound of the childish human voice, the spell was broken. Her appearance had but blended so harmoniously with the vision that occupied Nanni's thoughts, that it required the evidence of another sense to tell her it was a reality she beheld.

"Dear little angel, is it you? I was thinking of you—and wondering should I ever see you again."

"Often, dear Nanni, I hope; I mean to come and find you here, and see you, and chat with you; for we can be quiet, and by ourselves, and meet as often as we please, here, can't we?" said Isabella, sitting down beside her on the low seat she occupied.

"No, no; I had forgotten;" said Nanni hurriedly, and looking round her apprehensively, with the old trouble in her face. "You mustn't come here, dear, this is no place for you."

"No place! Why not? Nobody can see us together here—and that's all we need mind; Madame Leerheim said so. Though I don't know why. Do you?"

"She was right—she was right—you must not be seen with such as I. No, no—you must not come."

"What do you mean, Nanni? 'Such as you?' Why, what are you?"

The girl shuddered; suddenly started up, walked a pace or two about the room, wringing her hands. "Dear little innocent!" she muttered; then calming herself by a strong effort, she came towards Isabella, and sat down by her again.

"Dear child, listen;" she said. "I cannot tell you how or why it is not right for us to be together; but you will believe that I am telling you true, when I say that it is against my own will to ask you not to come to me again here; not to speak to me if you see me at any time in the streets; not to look towards me, or seem to know me. I ought perhaps to say, don't even think of me—best forget me—but I can't do

it. I can't give up that one blessing, to know you sometimes remember poor Nanni."

"I do indeed; I have often thought about you since that day you were so good to me; and why mustn't I come to tell you so? I can't forget, when any body has been so kind to me as you were."

"But if you thought me kind then, believe that I am kinder now, in telling you not to notice me, or come to me, or be seen with me. To show you, how hard it is to me as well as to you, to give up meeting, and yet how right I think it, that we should not meet, I will tell you, that every night, since that one on which I took you home, I have been to the street where you live, and looked up at your house, and wished you in my heart, good night, and sweet sleep, and happy dreams, in return for the blessed thought that innocent young face has been to me ever since I first beheld it."

"You have been every night outside our house to bid me good night, dear Nanni?" said Isabella, hanging upon her fondly. "And yet you will not let me love you in return for so much love? How can I help it? I must love you—I do love you—dearly."

"Dear child!" said Nanni, in her lowest, sweetest, most plaintive tone.

"And you will let me come and see you, and tell you so, sometimes, won't you dear Nanni?" urged the child persuasively.

"I must not—I dare not;" answered Nanni, resuming her disturbed look and manner. "Even now, I am injuring you, by letting you stay here; dear little creature, you must go—you must—you must." And she passionately kissed one of the long bright curls that hung about the child's fair throat.

"I can't bear to leave you, dear Nanni, as you say I mayn't come again," said Isabella; "but if it is as you say, and we mustn't be friends by meeting together, we'll think of each other always, and love each other, won't we? Promise me you'll remember me—and I shall never forget you, or your kindness to me. Here," continued the little girl, lifting from her neck a small silver chain, to which was attached a kind of medallion, with a figure of St. Clare wrought upon it, "here is a gift I had from sister Aloysia; but I know she would be pleased that I

should give it to you for a keepsake; and you will wear it in remembrance of me, won't you, dear Nanni?"

But the girl shrank back. "Not that—not that"—she said in her hurried, disturbed way; "give me one of these curls, and I'll keep it till my death."

"If you like it better,—yes;" and the child took up a pair of scissors that lay near, and gave them to Nanni, that she might sever the lock she still held.

And when this was done, Nanni repeated her former words:—"You must go, dear child; you must—you must; I may not, dare not let you stay. I will not even attend you home. As well no guard, as mine. You found your way here unharmed; you will return as safely. Go, dear, indeed you must."

"Since I must—goodbye—God bless you, good kind Nanni!" And Isabella was gone. As the door closed upon the child's departing figure, Nanni's head sank upon her hands, and she exclaimed in a broken voice—"'good and kind' only, in wringing my own heart, that I may for once do what I know to be right."

She sat thus for a few minutes, plunged in bitterness of thought; then she started up, determining to follow the child, and watch her, from a distance, safely home.

During those few minutes, Isabella had proceeded on her way; and passing near to the large house that was close by, she saw a huge bloated woman, sitting in the doorway, looking out from a sort of hatch, or low gate, that formed the entrance.

The bloated woman, who seemed to be eating some kind of stewed fruit from a dish that rested on her lap, nodded at the little girl, and said:—"How d'ye do, my pretty miss?" Then she beckoned with one of her fat fingers, and said:—"Come here, pretty miss. I want to speak t'ye!"

But Isabella did not go any nearer; she only looked at her with that sort of involuntary pertinacity which sometimes seizes children, and rivets their gaze upon what is at the same time unutterably repulsive to them. She could not help fixing her eyes upon the loose-hanging cheeks; the dark puffy lumps under the eyes; those fierce, yet leering

black eyes themselves; the coarse-grained, pimply skin, with its purple, and crimson, and red patches of colour; and above all, she could not keep from watching that single projecting tooth, which moved, and shifted, with every word and every grin, that twisted the horrible mouth.

"Come to me, my pretty miss; won't you come to me?" said the wheedling voice; which Isabella now recognized for the one that had spoken outside the door of Nanni's house, on that first evening she had come to this place; "won't you come here, and have some of these nice prunes?"

"I'd rather not, thank you;" and Isabella hurried on, glad to get away from the foul sorcery of that loathly face.

By the time she reached the more public thoroughfare, Nanni had overtaken her sufficiently to have her in sight; and then, keeping aloof but vigilant, she saw the child once more to her own door.

Next morning, full of the many thoughts that sprang out of this renewed encounter with one who had, from the first, so much interested her, Isabella hastened at the appointed hour to the convent garden, where she eagerly related to sister Aloysia all the circumstances of her meeting with Nanni; and then proceeded to question her upon all that so much perplexed her in them.

The good nun had seldom had a more difficult or painful task. Difficult, inasmuch as she had to make clear to a child's comprehension that which involves matter of enigma even to full-grown brains; painful, inasmuch as she had to introduce her neophyte, for the first time, to the knowledge of the existence of evil. But sister Aloysia was a being to shrink from neither difficulty nor pain. The one she was well-fitted to encounter, by a patient heart, a clear mind, strong sense, and more of hard-earned personal experience than might have been expected from her vocation; for sister Aloysia had gone through the fiery ordeal of a life of tribulation, and of worldly care and suffering, before she found peace as a nun; and as for pain, her sense of duty led her to meet and sustain it with martyrlike endurance and fortitude.

"Why should she wish me not to remain in her house, or to be with her at all?" was one of the child's most frequently recurring questions,

and one which seemed to puzzle her more than all; for she could not reconcile this with Nanni's evident love of her presence.

"She knew it was not good for you; it was on *your* account, she said that."

"Why?"

"It was not right for you, and she knew it, for you to be with her, and she spoke for your sake, not for hers. She had not courage to tell you, who showed a fondness for her, that she did not deserve it; that she was not good and virtuous, and consequently no fit companion for an innocent child like you."

"'Not good?' She was good and kind to me, when I was sore-footed and tired, and had lost my way. 'Not good?' You say she spoke for my sake, not hers—and that was good and unselfish, was it not? Nanni must be good!"

"You cannot yet understand how she is not good in the sense I mean, my child," said the nun. "But you can comprehend this; that a person may be imperfectly good; good in one thing and not in another. For instance, you yourself are truth-telling; an honest, courageous, good child, in coming to tell me of a fault when you have committed one; and yet you are sometimes weak enough not to be able to resist committing the fault itself. The other day, you could not forbear giving way to more violent expressions than became you, when you found that sister Josepha had neglected to water those new cuttings. I have frequently warned you against a warmth of indignation in your disposition, which exists beneath your calm exterior; and which, if not watched and checked betimes, will become a serious evil. You might have concealed that instance of it from me, but you did not; you told me of your misconduct yourself. Here, you see, you may be weak and faulty in one case, but frank and worthy in another; can you not therefore conceive that Nanni may be kind and good to you, yet not good in other respects?"

Isabella pondered; then said: "Yes; I see."

"Even she herself, you say," continued the nun, "owned that Madame Leerheim was right in saying you should not be seen with her. It is

so. She herself knows it as well as any one; and it is one of the best things in her favor that she admits this, by bidding you not to come. One of the evils of going to her house you can yourself perceive, and which she would save you from. It is evident, from what you tell me of that dreadful woman who came to her door that night, and whom you afterwards saw with a face so matched to her voice, that she is in the habit of entering Nanni's house; and such a woman you would not like to meet.

Isabella breathed a whispered, but earnest "No." Then she thought a few moments; and then she said:—"But Nanni's wishing to save me from meeting this frightful woman was kind? That was good, wasn't it?"

"It was right of her to prevent her coming in then; but she may not be able always to do so; you find that your going to her house yesterday, brought you to see and to speak to that woman, without Nanni's even knowing of it, much less, her being able to save you from it. The mere fact of her having such neighbours and associates, shows that her house is no fit resort for you; no fit place for you to go to any more; and you will, I know, give me your promise that you will never do so without my permission. In return, I promise you, that I will at some future time, when I think you at a more fit age to understand me, try to give you better and more explicit reasons; at present, I can only ask you to refrain from farther intimacy, on my simple word that it is far the best; best for you, and even for poor Nanni, who is thus far good, that I believe her bitterest punishment now, would be the reflection that you risked coming to harm through her."

"You call her 'poor Nanni!' You pity her then, though she is not good, you say."

"I pity her for that very reason; none are so deeply to be pitied as those who are not good; and none are more to be pitied than those who are not good in the sense that she is not good; and one of the most pitiable things attendant upon not being good in the way that she is not good, is, that it so little bears animadversion, discussion, or explanation. Honest examination into an evil is one great step towards reform.

Were the delinquency of Nanni and her unhappy sisterhood as open to general reprobation as the thief's or burglar's crime, it might be, that we should have fewer such cases as hers to deplore. And now, my dear child, let us talk of something else;" added the nun, who had spoken the latter few words, as if to herself.

Soon after this conversation with her friend and preceptress, Isabella had her thoughts entirely diverted from the subject that had so lately occupied them, by the society of her brother Claudio. The college vacation enabled him to be at home at this time, and a very happy holiday it was for them both.

Claudio was a fine, spirited boy; handsome, lively, active, with a keen sense of enjoyment, and a relish for the sports of his age. But this did not prevent his liking the quiet companionship of his young sister, or occasion his giving himself any airs of seniority towards her, although he was a year or two older than herself—a circumstance that sometimes operates upon boys of his age in making them contemptuous, or at best, condescending, to little girls of hers. On the contrary, the grave earnestness that distinguished Isabella, the refined character of her beauty, her contemplative nature, her spiritual look, while even yet a child, inspired her brother with something that almost amounted to reverence of feeling towards her; his affection partook of admiration: his love was strengthened by esteem; and he regarded her with a sort of tender respect, as one whom he instinctively felt to be of a higher nature than his own. This in no way detracted from the ease of intimacy and force of attachment between them. He was of too genuine, too noble a disposition, for any perception of her superiority to do otherwise than heighten his regard; and that, which in a less worthy temper might have generated envy, or estrangement, in his induced only reliance and enthusiastic preference. He was as fond of his young sister, as he was proud of her.

The very first day of his return, he had told her of his college-mates; of who were his favorites, of who were his antipathies, of who were his chief associates; of who among the masters and professors

were most to his liking, and of whom he could best learn; he told her of his school-hours, of his pastimes; of his studies, of his recreations; he told her of the great resource he had in the friendship of his father's friend, the lord Escalus, whose house was not far from the college, and who made a point of having him there as often as he could obtain permission to visit.

And then he made her tell him of her own pursuits; of how she passed her time; of how she amused herself; of how she spent the day from hour to hour.

In all he took a warm interest. He vehemently pitied her former loneliness in the deserted suite of rooms; he indulged in a few hearty expressions of disgust at the vacancy of her intercourse with the well-meaning widow-lady, who was no favorite of his; he congratulated her upon having formed so happy a friendship with the good nun. On the incident of her acquaintance with Nanni he made no comment, for it was not mentioned to him. From some intuitive impulse, Isabella, in narrating to her brother what had befallen since his last vacation, omitted any allusion to that one circumstance. Perhaps it was the sort of mystery which still invested the incident in her imagination, which prompted her clear transparent mind to avoid all speech of what it would otherwise have openly discussed; as long as it remained enshadowed and obscure, her delicacy forbidding approach to the subject.

But on the theme of her gentle friend, sister Aloysia, Isabella's confiding fluency could find full scope; freely and joyously did she pour forth to her brother all she felt, and all she hoped, from this delightful intercourse with the nun.

"She is so patient with me, dear Claudio; never weary of answering my questions; never finding fault with me when I am stupid, and can't perceive her meaning at once; never caring how often she repeats an explanation, or in how many ways she re-words a sentence, if I am unable to make it out. And then she tells me such curious things, and so many of them, and encourages me to consider them with her, and to tell her, in return, if there is any thing I don't understand in what she speaks of, that I could wish our three hours were twelve. I should like to be

all day—always—for ever, with sister Aloysia! You will love her dearly, Claudio, when you know her."

"But I shall never know her, I suppose;" said Claudio, half laughing; "nuns don't leave their convent, remember, Isabel."

"O, but I hope I shall have leave to take you into the convent-garden with me, to see her;" said his sister. It is a beautiful garden—with fine trees—and smooth lawns—you will like to be able to go into the garden whenever we please, and play there."

"That's not likely, Isabel; they won't let me go there."

"Why not?" said she.

"They don't admit men—that is a boy—into a nunnery."

"Why not?" she repeated.

"O because they don't;" said he, shyly; then he added laughing, "that's a girl's reason; but it must suffice you, Isabel, being a girl."

And both his shyness and his laughing words had more of boyish assumption of superior knowledge, than was usual to him, when speaking to his sister Isabella.

"Well, we shall see;" said she, nodding and smiling in her turn.

But she found, when she asked leave for her brother as well as herself to come to the convent-garden, that it was refused; and as he had predicted, because no male visitors were admitted. However, there was a portion of the grounds—where a conservatory stood, in which exotics, and other botanical rarities were cultivated—which was not considered within the precincts, and to which the curious of both sexes, were occasionally permitted access. Here, Isabella and her brother obtained leave to come and spend a portion of each day, on the same restrictions which had marked the little girl's first admission to the convent-garden. It was expressly stated that they were neither of them to pluck the flowers, touch the plants, or otherwise prove themselves unworthy the privilege which had been granted them.

At first they played very happily here; and made themselves bowers among the tall shrubs; and formed fancied huts and caves among the large green tubs; and imagined themselves wanderers on some remote sea-island, cast there by sudden shipwreck, or straying amid the palmated

branches and gigantic leaves of some far eastern solitude, thrown charmingly upon their own resources for habitation and food. They could dream themselves some brother and sister Sinbad roaming on unknown shores, expecting every moment to meet with the dread little old man of the sea, or to behold the sky darkened with the vast wings of the approaching roc. But soon, Claudio tired of this mimic scene. He one day leaned against the crag of crystal which was supposed to form one side of their hut,—but which was, in fact, the end window of the conservatory,—and looking through it at the portion of the convent-grounds which were visible thence, he said:—"I wish we could get leave to go into the garden; it seems a fine large one. This is such a stupid, confined place; there's no room for a good hearty game of play."

"You liked it very much, I thought, when we first got permission to come here, didn't you?" said Isabella.

"Yes, yes; *at first;*" retorted he.

"It isn't changed, is it?" said Isabella, simply.

"Changed; no—of course not."

"You thought it a delightful place then; and showed me how we could turn it into a beautiful desert island of our own, you know;" said she.

"But one can't go on making-believe for ever;" said he petulantly, climbing up on to the edge of a large green tub which supported a palm-tree, and which had represented the out-works of their hut, fenced against a probable attack of savages; but which he now used to obtain a better view into the garden. "What a pity we mayn't play there—we could have such a famous race along that avenue; couldn't we, Isabel?"

"Yes;" said she.

"I wish we might go there;" said he, presently, with more earnestness than before.

"I wish we might, since you wish it so much;" said Isabella; "but since we cannot, let's not think about it; don't look out at it any more. Claudio;" said she, laughing; "I think the sight of it only makes you long more to go."

"Of course it does;" said he, laughing too.

"Then jump down; and don't think about the garden any more. See, here are some apples I brought with me, to stock our hut with. If the savages attack us, we shall want store of provision, while the siege lasts."

"Pooh! I can't play at huts, and islands, and savages, any more;" said he, jumping down, however; "I'm tired of that game, an't you, Isabel?"

"No, I can't say I am: but let's invent some new one, if you like."

"What can one play at, in such a bit of a place as this is?" said he, tossing one of the apples, while he glanced somewhat contemptuously at the arena which he had before found spacious enough to serve as a whole tract of grove, plain, forest, rock, and valley. "If one might only pluck some flowers, or cut some branches, it would be something; one might turn the hut into a cave, and make ourselves into the king and queen, with crowns on. I wonder why they won't let us have some of these flowers; I'm sure there are plenty; I've a great mind to gather a few; they'd never be missed. What can they want with so many?"

"They forbade us to take them, so we mustn't; said Isabella quietly. "If you really wish for some, Claudio, I'll go and ask the prioress for them; but we must not gather them ourselves."

"Oh, it isn't so much for the flowers, that I care; it's for the pleasure of plucking them just as I like. Flowers put up in a bunch, and given to you, are nothing; but choosing them for yourself, and taking those you want, and no more, and doing so, just as the fancy bids you, and at the moment you feel inclined—that's a nosegay worth having!"

His sister looked at him as if she did not comprehend him; then he laughed at her wondering face; and then she smiled too, saying:—"Oh, I see, you're joking; and trying to make me stare, with your odd whims."

"Not I, indeed; I really should like some of these flowers. I've a great mind to take some. Why shouldn't I?"

"We were allowed to come here, on condition we didn't touch the plants, or do any mischief;" answered she; "besides, you would only have the mortification of owning what you had done."

"I don't see that;" said he. "Why need I own it? They would never know. There are too many blossoms here, for any to be missed."

"Oh, Claudio!" exclaimed Isabella.

"You needn't look so shocked, my little saint;" said her brother, lightly laughing; "I was not going really to touch them; I'm too much obliged to the reverend lady-nuns, for their kindness to my young sister, to steal any of their property—though I must say I think they're rather dog-in-the-mangerish with their blossoms; they neither use them themselves, nor let others have the pleasure of gathering."

"You mistake, dear Claudio; the flowers are used in dressing the chapel-altar; the garden supplies very few, and these are collected for the purpose."

Claudio had been tossing and catching the apple all the while she spoke; he now threw it to his sister, exclaiming:—"Catch, Isabel!" She, pleased to find him willing to engage in a new sport, entered into this game of ball with spirit, and they went on playing some time, until suddenly the apple flew from Claudio's hand, and spun through one of the panes of the conservatory-window, smashing and scattering the fragments of glass.

An affrighted exclamation burst from both children at once, as they heard the crash.

"It's broken!"

"Whereabouts?" said Claudio, after a pause, as he peered about, in vain trying to discover the fracture. "I don't see a single damaged pane any where, do you?"

"No;" said Isabella; "but I am sure there must be one on that side; I heard the blow of the apple, as if it went right through the window."

Claudio crept up upon the bulwarks of the island hut, and looking closely at the window which formed the end of the conservatory near to which the tub stood, and in the direction whence the crash had been heard, he descried the broken pane among some neighbouring plants.

"It is here," whispered he to his sister; "I see it plainly; but it is quite out of sight from where you stand; the broad thick leaves of that

fan tree hide it completely." He stepped down; and as he came towards where his sister stood, he looked back to see whether he could perceive that pane from any point he passed; but from none else than the one he had just occupied, among the tubs that were ranged near to the window, was the fracture visible.

"It is quite hidden; it will never be found out;" said he, glancing at Isabella.

"But we can point out where to look for it; it will have to be mended directly, that the draught may not hurt the plants;" said she. "Yes, how completely those fan leaves cover the spot! It would never be guessed that there was a broken pane there!"

"Never! Unless we told;" said Claudio, again looking at her

"Which of course we shall;" said she, returning his look with her clear open one, and with her usual quiet gravity of manner.

"Why 'of course'?" asked her brother. "Why need we tell? They will never know of the accident, if we do not mention it."

"*We* shall know it; we shall know that there is a hole in the window that lets in a stream of air bad for the plants; we shall know that it would be mended if they could see it, or if we told them where to look for it;" said Isabella; "therefore we ought to tell."

"But they will be displeased—they will forbid us the place—they will not allow us to come and play here any more;" said her brother.

Her face fell. "I shall be sorry for that. "Then it brightened again, as she added, "but even that will not be so bad—you had become tired of it you know, and found it too small for playing in."

"But I shouldn't like to be turned out, for all that;" said Claudio, "especially, on account of my own carelessness. Besides, I hate to have to go and tell of myself. I can't, Isabel; I can't."

"Then I will go for you;" said she.

"What, tell tales of me?" he said hastily.

"Not of you only;" said she. "I will own that we broke the window playing at ball together. I will myself make the confession to the prioress, and then you will be spared the pain of telling."

"You are a generous little soul, Isabel;" said her brother, giving

her a hug; "but it is not fair that you should take any blame in this matter, for it was I made the throw that broke the window, not you."

"We were both playing; the unlucky hit might just as well have been mine, as yours;" said she simply.

"But why need it be owned at all?" said he. "It will be sure to cost us dear; we shall be punished; we shall be dismissed from here in disgrace, besides having the shame of telling."

"But it would be a worse shame to keep it a secret; we should feel more disgraced coming here knowing we didn't deserve it;" said Isabella.

"Do you think so?" was his reply.

"I am sure so;" she rejoined.

"To you, perhaps it would;" said her brother thoughtfully.

"And to you, too, dear Claudio;" she said. "I know you would never be comfortable or enjoy coming here any more, after having forfeited the right to do so, if the secret were ever so well kept."

"You would feel this, my good little sister, because you are very scrupulous, very conscientious; your friend, the nun, has taught you to be so; I'm afraid we boys are not so particular;" he said, with a half sigh, half smile.

"But you boys have very high notions of honor, haven't you?" said his sister.

"Yes, yes.—of *honor*;" replied he, with an emphasis on the word.

"Well then, do you not think it would be dishonorable, mean, cowardly, base, to conceal a fault you had committed, merely to preserve a privilege that your fault, were it known, would forfeit?" said Isabella, with her usual calm eyes flashing, and her voice trembling with unwonted eagerness.

"You are right, my dear little moralist," said he, smiling outright at her warmth; "and I will do as you would have me—as somehow you always make me do; I suppose it is, because I know that you are better than my scapegrace self. But I would not have you one jot less good, less scrupulous, less conscientious than you are, Isabel mine. Who knows? your better genius may be my good one, some day or other.

and help to save me from any pickle that may befal your less worthy brother. Come, if it must be so, let's at once go and make our confession; best get it over at once. Which is the way to the convent parlour, where we may have our formidable interview with the prioress?"

"She is not formidable;" said his sister, laughing; "reverend mother is one of the pleasantest, kindest, most cheerful women you ever beheld. I love her dearly."

"What, better than sister Aloysia?"

"Than sister Aloysia? O, I love *her* more than any body in the world—except perhaps.——" She stopped; and looked with an affectionate smile in Claudio's face.

"Yes, yes;" said he, returning it proudly, with one equally fond; "Isabel will always keep a warm corner in her heart for her naughty scapegrace brother."

"Who calls him so, but his own modesty?" said she. "Not Isabel; who knows him for the best, the most loving of brothers."

Time passed; and found the tenor of Isabella's daily life unaltered. Her father's profession still detained him absent from Vienna and his children. Madame Leerheim's house was, as before, their appointed home; Claudio remained at college; while Isabella had masters, belonging to the school which was part of the convent establishment, at the same time deriving her principal instruction,—her moral culture—from the gentle nun, sister Aloysia.

Once, while yet a very young girl, Isabella happened to be taking a walk, attended by Bertha. A crowd approached. It proved to be some soldiers, who were conducting to prison a Bohemian lad, suspected of having murdered a young companion. The deed had not been brought home to him, but the circumstances in which the body had been found, were thought so conclusive against this lad, that he was arrested and brought to Vienna to await his trial. There was a train of idlers accompanying the military and their prisoner, hooting, and hissing, and reviling him, as he passed along. He was bound, and led between two soldiers; his wild hair hung loose and dishevelled over his eyes, which now and

then gleamed forth savage glances of anger and confusion towards the pitiless mob. Now and then he shook the disordered locks back, with a toss of his head,—for his hands being bound behind him. he could not lift them to his face,—as if he were about to fling some bitter retort at his tormentors; but relapsing into dogged sullenness, he allowed the hair to fall once more over his brow—though it ill served to hide his flushed cheeks and scowling glances.

"I'm glad they've caught the young ruffian!" ejaculated mistress Bertha.

"Glad!" echoed Isabella.

"Yes, glad, miss; I'm sure it was he." And then the damsel recounted what she had heard of his suspected crime.

"But how can you be sure, Bertha, that it was he who did the murder? Even they who took him, are not sure;" said Isabella.

"O, I'm sure; I'm quite sure;" said the damsel. "Look at him, miss; only look at him! There's a murdering face for you, clear enough. Only look at it!"

"But it seems to distress him, to be looked at;" replied Isabella. "See how he shrinks from being stared at, as they are all doing."

Just then, the procession halted; the officer who conducted the party, stopped to let his horse drink, at a fountain that stood there; the men grounded arms, and took a few moments' rest after their long march; for they had captured the lad at a spot some miles distance. During this pause. the Bohemian remained motionless; only the wrath-darting eyes, the dilating nostrils. and the heaving chest, bore witness to his agitation. He stood panting, dusty, with bloodshot eyes, parched tongue, and lips apart, looking like a goaded animal, at bay.

As he stood thus, only a few paces from the doorway. where Isabella and her attendant had taken refuge, till the crowd should have passed, the kerchief that hung closely round the lad's neck, became entirely detached and fell to the ground. The thoughtless crowd laughed, in derision at the convulsive movement with which the bound arms twitched, as if they would have made an effort to recover the fallen handkerchief; but the laugh had not died away, when Isabella stepped forward, and in

her own quiet grave manner, took it from the ground, and placed it in the lad's jacket-pocket.

The restless eye gleamed—but with another expression then; a look of surprise, of awe, of gratitude, of almost tenderness, dwelt sadly in them, in place of the ire that sparkled there before, as they fell upon the gentle benificence at his side.

He had scarcely endeavoured to mutter hoarsely and huskily:—"Thanks!"—when the word was given to move on, and the procession resumed its way.

"Good gracious, miss Bella!" said the damsel, when she had regained her young lady's side. "How could you pick up that filthy rag of a handkerchief! How could you bring yourself to touch it?"

"Nobody else took it up for him; he could not lift it for himself;" said Isabella.

"Then there it might have lain, for me, I'm sure;" said Bertha; "I should as soon have thought of touching a toad, as a murderer's neckerchief A hempen cravat's the only one I'd think of helping him to, I warrant him."

Isabella did not answer any farther; but next morning, she asked her friend the nun, how it was that no one but herself, in all that crowd of people, had seemed to think of assisting one so helpless and unhappy as this boy prisoner.

"They believed him to be guilty as well as unhappy;" was the nun's reply.

"They could not be sure that he was guilty—that he had committed murder;" said Isabella; "for Bertha told me that his crime had not been proved. Ought they to have treated him as a wicked wretch, unworthy of help, until they were quite certain he was not as innocent as they?"

"Crowds seldom consider; mobs rarely deal justly;" said the nun.

"But supposing that he were really guiltless of the deed imputed to him," said Isabella, "this youth would in fact have been most cruelly injured, instead of deserving to be treated with slight and scorn; for he would then have been dragged all those miles, bound and

guarded, treated as a prisoner, held up as a show and a gaze, on a false charge,—on a mere mistake of his accusers. He would have been subjected to suffering, to insult, which no after-clearing of his innocence could redress. They could not make him unsuffer what he had suffered."

After a pause, Isabella resumed:—"I wonder whether this Bohemian lad—Barnardine, Bertha said his name was,—really did kill his companion. He seemed such a boy, to have done so great a crime. Do you think he's guilty?"

"I have no means of judging, my child;" said the nun. "The best I can hope for him, is, that those who have, will use them quickly, to the end that his innocence, if he be innocent, may be established. Should his trial be delayed, all the evils of exposure to vicious example, to prison immorality, to dungeon idleness, recklessness, and despondency, will then be his allotted portion—and it would be scarce less than a miracle should he escape their influence. He will then be *made* what he is now only *believed*,—a criminal. He will be hardened, bronzed against all better feeling. The heart that now softens, the young eye that now melts, beneath the look of kindness and of sympathy, and the helping hand of beneficence, will then know no sense of virtue. Alike too late will then be counsel, assistance, or even correction; and the boy Barnardine, who might haply have been reclaimed, will be the veteran villain, equally unfit to be spared, or to be condemned to death."

"But do you think his trial will be delayed?" asked Isabella.

"I know not; but I fear it;" replied sister Aloysia. "Our young duke, Vincentio, is a retired man; a scholar, rather than a governor; more devoted to a student's leisure, than to a statesman's jurisdiction; it is to be dreaded he may be more contemplative than active; more given to reflection, than to exercise of sway; more bent on storing knowledge, than on learning to rule; and this is hardly fitting in a prince who has the weal and moral condition of his subjects committed to his care. However, Vincentio is virtuous, well-disposed, learned, pious. Let us hope all good from his reign."

As Isabella advanced in girlhood, her imaginativeness, her childish

innocence, became scarcely less a part of her nature; but they took the form of ideality, purity, and a refinement of soul that bade her seek communion with things above this world. Her habitual mood was contemplation; her happiness, religion. She was reflective, devout, serene in faith; fervent in hope. She was gentle, yet dignified; candid, yet femininely reserved. She had still that look of spirituality, which distinguished her as a child. She seemed surrounded by an atmosphere of holiness and sanctity, which rejected assimilation with gross materiality. Her face was as if an unsound thought could never find entrance among those which gave expression to its fair open truth. Her words, her gestures, all the harmonious lines that composed her gracious form, were instinct with the charm of modesty. Her very garments appeared to have a property of cleanness and purity, as if no soil or blemish could attach to them. White-robed, spotless, she looked, and moved, a virgin saint.

Yet with all this native immaculacy, she was neither intolerant nor uncharitable with regard to sin in others. In the first place she was slow to conceive evil; and when she did discover its existence, it filled her with pity rather than resentment for the guilty. She felt compassion for those who fell, and regarded them rather as victims than as culprits, when their sins were the result of ignorance, helplessness, or adverse circumstances; and she was ever ready to attribute sin to any of these causes, until she had received demonstration that it arose from voluntary error. It seemed to her too improbable that sin could be a selected portion. It was only when convinced that degradation was wilfully incurred, that vice was sought, that crime was spontaneously committed, that her indignation was aroused. Then that latent warmth of disposition,—against which sister Aloysia had warned her, lest it should transgress due bounds,—would lead her, into an energy of expression, a heat of language, compounded of generous feeling and disdain; of anger at the perverseness, of contempt at the folly, of those who could so madly choose. It was rarely that such occasions presented themselves; but when they did, it was startling to hear one so apparently calm, pour forth such passionate declamation. Her reflective habits, her mode of education, natu-

rally induced a practice of argument; and she was accustomed to speak her thoughts in that manner, gaining either refutal or confirmation from the replies she received.

Some years had elapsed since the Bohemian lad's imprisonment on suspicion of murder; when Bertha happened to mention something she had heard, which forcibly revived the circumstance in Isabella's recollection. When she next met the nun, she reminded her of what had then been their surmises respecting the too probable result of prolonged imprisonment should his trial be delayed.

"It is as you predicted, sister Aloysia; the wretched man's innocence or guilt has never been rightly ascertained; his case has never had strict examination; some say, he has been sentenced, but reprieved, from time to time, at the instance of benevolent persons, who interfered for him. Be that as it may, his incarceration has endured all this time, and I hear that he is now so utter a reprobate, that there is no trace of the touches of good—all wild as they were—which formerly distinguished him. When he first entered the prison, he was furious at being deprived of his liberty; he would rave at his accusers, he would storm at his jailers; but he had moments of savage gaiety, he would sing snatches of the national airs of his country, he would speak of his little sister Tonerl, and he would express a longing to see her, and to return with her to their native Bohemia But year after year passed; his thoughts of home faded,—lost their softening influence: he yielded to the profligate example, the loose companionship, the vicious influence, ever too surely afforded by a prison, and is now so sunk in obduracy, that even the provost of the prison (a kind-hearted man, Bertha says,—he is a relation of hers,) has lost all concern for him; he says he is such a mere lump of brutality—such 'a thorough jail-bird,' is his word. But then, how was he made so? By what fault of neglect was he converted from a man into an animal? How came it, that instead of fostering, until they burned brightly, the few sparks of good, latent in his nature, they were suffered to be smothered, extinguished, by the unwholesome air of a dungeon? Why should it be, that the scanty seeds of virtue which might have been found, and brought, in time, to bear blossom and fruit,

should have been, instead, buried in the uncongenial soil of an underground cell, so that none but rank and poisonous weeds should be the produce? To make of a youth, who might have been reformed into a worthy subject, a mere callous, worse-than-useless member of society, is surely an act of impolicy as well as injustice."

"And this is not the whole of the mischief, in the present instance;" continued Isabella; "his poor young sister, Antonia—'pretty Tonerl,' as he called her,—without parents, deprived of her brother's protection, fell into evil ways; went astray, Bertha says; was deserted; and in a fit of grief and despair, drowned herself!"

Sister Aloysia breathed a pious ejaculation—part horror, part intercession,—for the soul of this second victim of man's neglectful error.

After a pause, Isabella repeated musingly:—"the poor young thing 'went astray,' Bertha said. 'No brother to protect her!' From what, I wonder?"

The good nun took this opportunity of giving Isabella the explanation she had formerly promised, when she should be older and fitter to comprehend her meaning. She gently revealed to her, that by an inscrutable ordination of the Almighty, sin and evil were permitted to exist; she spoke to her of the degradation of vice, of the misery of crime; she told her of the many ways in which frail humanity is beset; of the passions which urge, of the temptations which allure; she spoke of those who fall by weakness of heart, as well as by strength of inclination; of those who are misled by ill counsellors, betrayed by false or pretended friends, as well as those who only listen to the inward promptings of bad propensity; she showed how the native greater weakness of women, both in frame and in heart, rendered them peculiarly liable to fall away from virtue, and to yield to vice; and that the very softness and flexibility of their natures, though originally disposing them to good, yet also tended to make them easier victims to sinister influence. She then unveiled to her,—as a tender mother might do,—how the especial virtue, esteemed the crown of women, was fair chastity; how it behoved them to preserve that crown untarnished; how it was a duty to watch diligently their own hearts, lest solicitation from thence should join with

that they might meet elsewhere, to betray them; how it was a glory and a grace to live unsullied; how it was irremediable shame and dishonor to fall.

"But surely, where the glory is so great, on the one hand, and the penalty so severe on the other," said Isabella, "the wonder is, that women should ever yield,—should ever fall. Well may the sex be called weak,—foolish,—frail, if they are so untrue to their own best interests."

"Thus it appears to you, on the first glance. But consider. How many are there, who have any one to represent to them their true best interest? How many are there, who have the aiding strength of morality and religion? How many poor girls are taught even simple right from wrong? Too few, I fear. Remember, therefore,—you, who are a lady by birth, secluded by position, and one who by circumstance has been made acquainted with the full value and privilege of keeping pure, body and soul,—remember, I say, to be lenient when you judge of error among the fallen of your sex. Be strict to your own slightest deviation from rectitude; be charitable to the utmost backsliding of your guilty sisterhood. That rigid adherence to virtue, which in you, is mere duty, and scarcely more than a selfish regard to your own advantage, is in them a high merit, and too frequently the price of heroic self denial, of sublimest sacrifice."

"Sacrifice!" said Isabella. "Surely, for highest gain."

"Ay, sacrifice;" replied the nun. "Sacrifice for highest gain, it is true—yet still sacrifice. What should you know, my dear child, you, enclosed within a sanctuary of peace, know of the temptations, the almost irresistible temptations, of the daily world? How should you rightly estimate the promptings of passion—you, who have had your feelings regulated, your affections duly filled, your principles confirmed? How may you judge of the solicitations of a generous and compassionate heart, more ready to favor another than itself—you, who have never been exposed to lawless pleadings, either from your own unguided heart, or from the still more dangerous voice of one you would fain oblige? What idea can you form of the whisperings of vanity, the thoughts of a girl, who

sees herself in rags, while others are becomingly decked,—you, who have always had ladylike attire supplied for your wear. What are you to guess of the urgency of hunger,—you, who have your daily meals provided, and have never known the sting of more than a few hours' sharpened appetite, or a delayed unquenching of thirst? Think of these things, in their true force,—put yourself in the place of a poor young creature, day by day surrounded and beset by such influences, and then judge of her fall; then say, whether it be not almost a miracle, if she maintain her integrity."

"A miracle, indeed!" whispered Isabella.

"Holy mother forbid, my dearest child," said the nun, "that I should for one instant seek to dethrone the sacred image of Chastity from the exaltation she occupies in your thought, or help to diminish your sense of the necessity firmly to abide by her laws, or in any way lessen your reverence for those who do hold fast by Virtue, all I would do is to teach you commiseration for those so unhappy as to abandon her service, to forfeit her privileges, to exchange her happiness, for the misery of Vice."

"Poor Tonerl! Poor Nanni!" exclaimed Isabella, when the nun had concluded; "I comprehend the mystery of your stories now; I have learned to know and to pity the truth of your condition! I understand your own errors, as well as those of others towards you! I see the reason of your grief, your despair!"

Letters, about this time, from Isabella's father, brought news of a much regretted loss he had sustained, in the death of a dear friend of his, a companion-in-arms, a renowned brother soldier. He lamented his fate the more, inasmuch as it had not occurred as the friends could have hoped—on the battle-field.

"Had my noble friend, Frederick, met his death, sword in hand, in the service of his country, his fate had hardly been to be deplored;" thus ran the letter; "it would have been but that end which all brave soldiers covet. But he has sailed with his men, in pursuit of that scourge of the seas, the famous pirate, Ragozine; and Heaven, in its

mysterious wisdom, saw fit to send, instead of his hoped-for prey, a violent storm, which wrecked the ship, and sent my valiant friend to a watery grave. With him, in the vessel, was all his hoarded pay, the wealth he had acquired during many years' devotion to his prince and country. Several brilliant exploits and honorable achievements had made this wealth considerable, and the greater portion was intended, I know, for the dower of his sister, Mariana. From certain circumstances confided to me by my friend respecting this virtuous young lady, and the nobleman to whom she is betrothed, I fear the loss of her beloved brother, is not the only consequence she will have to bewail from this fatal shipwreck. If Heaven grant me life and opportunity to return, I will regard this unhappy lady as my especial charge; and her fortunes shall be as much my care as those of my own children. From all I learn concerning the heart and mind of my Claudio and Isabella, I have no fear but that they will join me in my every wish to serve one whom I regard in the light of a sacred bequest from my dear lost friend, the noble Frederick."

Isabella was on her way to the nun, to show her this letter, and she was pondering on its contents, and beseeching Heaven to grant her prayer for her father's speedy release from his duties, that he might return to Vienna, and learn to love his children in person, as well as he seemed inclined to love them on report, when she suddenly felt some one touch her timidly on the arm, and turning, she saw a woman at her side, whom she at first did not recognize, but whom, after a moment, she remembered once to have seen walking with Nanni on the Prater, when she had met her there with Madame Leerheim.

"I beg your pardon, miss;" said the woman, "but you seemed so deep in thought, I could not get you to notice me; so I made bold to——" she glanced at the elbow she had touched

"What have you to tell me? Aught of poor Nanni? Speak; tell me!" said Isabella earnestly.

"Poor Nanni, indeed! Well may you call her so. She is dying, poor wench,—and frightfully; O, how frightfully!"

The woman broke off with a sob, and turned away.

"Dying! Where? Lead me to her;" said Isabella.

"Then you will go to her, will you?" said the woman, turning again quickly to Isabella. "That is her hope. She says she dares ask you to come and see her now, as she is dying; many and many's the time she has crept here o'nights, to see you; at least to catch a glimpse of your window, and fancy she watched you sleeping. A good heart, she has, poor wench, with all her odd fancies;—but we're queer creatures, we women; most of us." The woman paused, and seemed to be half talking to herself.

"But Nanni—Nanni—dying, you say!" repeated Isabella.

"Yes she's dying, sure enough—and says it's only because she's so surely dying, that she ventures to ask you to come and see her. Death makes all even; it makes the good forget to despise the wicked—the rich to neglect the poor. Coffins are sometimes not grudged, where timely help would have been better. But," continued the woman, looking up again from the dreamy way in which she ever and anon looked down and muttered to herself, "if you come, as you say you will, it must be soon, for she won't last long."

The woman shuddered, and then added; "you must prepare your tender heart—Nanni says you have a tender heart—and I see you have—for a shock. Her sufferings are frightful, poor wench; and now that she has once owned her state, she don't mind letting us see her writhe in torture, or hear her scream: which before, she managed to keep from doing, that we mightn't find her out, and have a doctor."

Isabella held her breath, that she might speak calmly, and not increase the woman's agitation (which alternated with the dreamy way her manner assumed between whiles) so as to prevent her from explaining herself intelligibly; and then said:—"What do you mean by 'her state'?"

The woman told her that the blow which Nanni received from the horse's hoof had been the original cause of her present condition. That, at first, the pain had been such as to be unnoticeable, unless the bruised part were touched; that it had gone on, however, from year to year, growing worse and worse, and had at length produced cancer, which had

been concealed, until incurable. That from some unaccountable whim, Nanni had persevered in keeping the secret of her ailment, but that she was unaccountable and whimsical altogether.

There was a singular mixture of sympathy and vexation in this woman's manner, as she spoke of Nanni. She seemed angry with her, and sorry for her, at the same time; and as if she would fain have not felt so deeply for her as she did, and yet could not help it.

"She set her heart upon seeing you, and I couldn't refuse her, poor wench, when she begged me to fetch you;" said the woman in conclusion; "I shall comfort her by carrying word back that you've promised to come."

"I shall not fail;" said Isabella. "Tell poor Nanni that I shall be with her not long after your return."

The woman, wiping her eyes on her shawl, turned away; and Isabella resumed her way to the convent; for she determined to see sister Aloysia before she went to Nanni, remembering her promise, that she would not go to her house again without the nun's permission. She made no doubt of obtaining it, when she remembered the deed of mere charity which her visit now involved; and she was right. The good nun at once bade her go; sending a lay-sister with her, to carry a basket of necessaries and comforts for the sufferer.

They reached the suburbs; and on tapping at the door of the small low-roofed house, it was opened by the woman who had brought Nanni's message to Isabella. She put her finger on her lips, as they entered, and whispered:—"The poor wench sleeps; I found her in a happier way on my return, than when I left her; the pain's suddenly gone—no more of those dreadful screams and writhings—she's quiet now—and able to sleep."

"Best not disturb her;" said Isabella, in the same tone; and she proceeded to make her arrangements for staying to watch by Nanni's bedside, dismissing the lay-sister, telling her she would send and let her know if any decided change took place, which should require assistance. She then, thanking the woman who had hitherto nursed Nanni, for her kind care of their poor friend, begged her to take some repose, which she was sure she must need, after so much fatigue and anxiety

"Enough of them—to be sure;" said the woman; "but I had the means of bearing them. Here's what helps us to bear even worse things than fatigue and anxiety," said she, still in a whisper, but with the agitation which occasionally marked her manner, when it did not subside into that inert kind of dreaminess before alluded to; and, as she spoke, she filled herself out a glass of some sort of ardent spirit, from a bottle that stood on the table.

"Besides, I felt that anything I could bear or do for her, she would have done fifty times over for me;" added the woman, nodding her head towards the bed where Nanni lay; "she had always a good heart, poor wench."

And the woman tossed off the liquor at a gulp.

"Do you not fear that it may do you more harm than good?" asked Isabella. "Do you not fear that though it helps you to bear many painful things, yet that it brings a pain and destruction of its own?"

The woman turned quickly, looking her in the face, and with an almost fierceness of manner, scarce the less vehement for the whisper she still maintained in consideration of the sleeper's presence, said:—"Do I not fear it? No. Do I not know it? Yes. I know that it brings old age while a woman is still young—that it sets wrinkles, where smiles should be—that it digs lines instead of dimples—that it turns cheek-roses to saffron—that it dulls the eye, withers the skin, palsies the hand; that it poisons the blood, and strikes decrepitude into young bones; that it is assured and early death. But it is palsied age encountered boldly—it is death met blindfold. It gives us courage to hug our ruin; and its fire,—consuming though it be,—lights and warms us on our way, and gives us temporary life while leading to the grave. It is the candle to the fluttering moth—radiant destruction. Like the wandering vapours that flit by night in burial-grounds, it lures us on, till we plunge headlong and unheeding into yawning churchyard mould. We reach the brink unthinkingly, half bewildered, half dazzled; the glare has thrown our danger into shadow, and it is worth while to have it kept out of sight as long as possible—until the last inevitable moment. For it must come—it must, it must."

As the woman uttered the last words in her slow, musing, abstracted manner, her eyes rested upon the bed of the dying Nanni.

Isabella said softly:—"Since death must come, is there not a better courage to meet it with, than the one you choose? Why keep it out of sight, because it is inevitable? Why not rather learn to seek it as a friend, than be cheated towards it as an unavoidable enemy?"

"Too late! too late!" muttered the woman, with her eyes still fixed in the same direction; while Isabella thought how she had heard those very words—those fatally comprehensive words—uttered by her whom they watched.

Presently the woman roused herself; went towards the table, poured out another glass of spirit, swallowed it, and then saying:—"I will seek the rest you bid me. Should you want anything, call; we shall hear you, some of us, from the large house; this is Nanni's own cottage; I'll leave you here for the present, since you're so good as to stay with her;" she went out, closing the door softly behind her.

Nanni's slumber lasted uninterruptedly for some hours. Mortification had come on; and, freed from pain, she was able to sleep.

She awoke refreshed; and uttered her companion's name,—the woman who had tended her during her illness.

"Dear Nanni, I am here to take care of you, now; you will be pleased to have me for your nurse, will you not?" said the gentle voice of Isabella.

"And so you are come, angel that you are! I knew you would!" The dying girl fixed her eyes on Isabella's face, with a look of full content. "You are the same pure angel, that you looked to me when a child! You were always, more like a spirit of light and goodness, than a mere mortal creature, like—like ourselves;"—and the voice faltered, and the look of content left the countenance, and the old trouble cast its shadow there.

She turned her head feebly away, and sighed, and said.—"You are come—because your good heart bade you come—and because it suspected nothing that should keep you away—but perhaps, if you knew——"

"I know all;" was Isabella's quiet reply.

Nanni's head turned more quickly now,—as quickly as her weakness would allow,—towards Isabella. Fixing her eyes upon her, she repeated emphatically, "you know all?"

Isabella, without averting her own, bowed assent.

"You know what has been my reprobate way of life?—what has been my error—my fall? You know what a thing of shame and sin I am? you know what I, indeed, am?"

"I do."

"It is best thus;" said Nanni, after covering her face with her hand in silence, for a few moments; "the shame and pain of having you know it, is made up for by having now nothing to conceal, and by the comfort of finding that you still have love enough for poor Nanni, to bid you come, spite of what you know her to be."

"It was only your own delicacy and consideration for me, that kept me from you so long, dear Nanni;" said Isabella.

"Our own frailty sets a barrier between ourselves and the innocent and good; and it is fitting we should bear the penalty, by not seeking to transgress the limit, or to covet their sympathy and society;" said Nanni. "It is seldom, indeed, that the wish exists, on either side; generally, we outcasts are as little anxious to associate with the virtuous, as they are with us; but it is perhaps my misfortune, that while my errors depraved, they never hardened me."

"Do not say so, Nanni;" said Isabella; "so long as one softening regret, one remorseful emotion remains, to touch the heart, depend on it, that heart is never wholly lost to good It is callousness, it is indifference in evil courses, that are the bane of all redemption from them."

"You comfort me;—I knew you would—you always did—the mere sight of you from the first, seemed to do my sore heart good. But I could not give myself that comfort at the risk of harm to you. And yet, perhaps, I might. Your pure soul would have been as little injured by contact with vice and pollution,—it would have as surely shrunk from them, as crystal water refuses to mingle with grease and filth. Still, why subject you to the disgust and heart-sickness of even knowing such things to exist. No, no, I dared not be so selfish. Only now, now, that

I am surely dying, I can beseech the comfort of your presence; and may Heaven reward you for granting it to me."

"You are easier now, dear Nanni, are you not? The pain seems abated, from what I learned of your sufferings before I came. You may recover still," said Isabella.

Nanni shook her head. "I know what this is; it is no healing calm; it is the calm of coming death—but I bless it, since it gives me to feel fully the comfort of having you near; at the same time that it spares you from witnessing throes you could not relieve"

Three or four women now entered the cottage, asking if they could do aught for the service of their dying companion; but Nanni thanked them; told them the young lady they saw, had come purposely from a convent to nurse her, as a work of charity and pious humility, and would therefore take their place in the kind attendance they had hitherto given her. She again thanked them heartily, bade them a sad farewell, and said she hoped soon to be at rest.

One of the young women,—their eyes all bore witness that they were much affected,—stooped towards Nanni, and sobbed out a few words that reached Isabella's ear.

"Mrs. Overdone bade me say, Nanni, that she hoped you'd forgive her for not coming to you, but that it made her miserable to see you suffer so, and couldn't help you at all; and she hoped, if you were so bad that you must die, that you'd forgive her for other things worse than not coming to see you; that perhaps it would have been better if you'd never seen her—but that at any rate, she hoped you'd forgive her."

"I forgive her all! Tell her so from me. Good-bye!"

The young women went away, crying; and as the cottage-door closed behind them, Nanni said:—"they've been kind and good to me; they don't want for kindness, poor souls, in their way; it is their having had kind hearts, too kind and too tender hearts once, that has been mostly the cause of their being what they are. God knows!"

"You sent a message of forgiveness to some one—to her—that terrible woman—I happened to see her once—who I suppose was the cause of your misery, Nanni, was she?"

"Not the cause—not the sole cause; one of the causes, she certainly was. But it was my own fatal weakness, joined to my still more fatal ignorance,—for it was that which gave my weakness power to work my downfall,—which originally lost me. It is too long a tale for me now to tell—too sad a tale for you to hear—one that you need not its warning to encounter the pain of hearing—and one that is too common, alas, in its melancholy truth."

"You did well and generously to forgive even that terrible woman, one cause, though she was, of your fate;" said Isabella. "You cannot, therefore, still regret having preserved your heart unhardened, since it leaves you capable of generosity sufficient to send your pardon even to such a being."

"She is indeed 'a terrible woman,'" muttered Nanni, with a shudder; "and to your innocent eyes she must appear a very monster of hideousness and abomination; but even that woman has some touches of good in her, that would amaze those who know not how difficult it is for even wickedness and sin utterly to deface the divine image originally stamped on poor humanity. I have known that woman, in a time of dearth, forego a meal of her own that she might bestow it on a starving child; I have known her make many sacrifices of personal comfort—no slight self-denial on the part of a woman like her—that she might maintain a little ricketty bantling, deserted by its parents; I have known her ever pitiful towards the orphaned and homeless child; for children are her passion,—the love and sympathy she feels for childhood is her saving grace—her single point of genuine feeling and goodness. That is her one redeeming particular.—in all else she is, truly, a 'terrible woman.' She has been a 'terrible woman' to me."

"Yet your forgave her; your unhardened heart forgave her;" repeated Isabella.

"I forgave her, as I could hope myself to be forgiven;" sighed Nanni. "Hope, did I say? No hope for such as I!"

"Hope of forgiveness; ay, good hope;" said Isabella. "That heart, which not only abhors and repents its own sin, but can also find pardon for those who have sinned against itself, may not lose hope. Was it not

given to the unhappy sinner of old, to hear those benign words, 'her sins which are many, are forgiven?' Let me tell you of some of these blessed promise-words, dear Nanni. Let them carry their own comfort and strength to your drooping courage. Let your heart—still in its trembling humility 'an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.'"

Through the watches of the night, Isabella kept faithful vigil by Nanni's bed-side. The sufferer had sunk into rest, calmed and composed by the serene trust in Almighty mercy, which her gentle nurse had sought to inspire; but just as the grey dawn crept through the checked curtains of the cottage-window, Isabella perceived that that rest would never again be broken. Slumber had subsided into death; and Nanni's cares were over.

Isabella arose; composed the limbs, and disposed all smoothly and reverently around the poor frail tenement of clay; then knelt, praying long and fervently for the erring spirit now fled to meet its fiat for eternity. She was still thus lowly and earnestly pleading, when the lay-sister softly opened the door of the cottage.

"The poor thing is dead, is she?" whispered the nun, as Isabella arose from her knees. "I knew she could not survive many hours; so as soon as matins were finished, I came to see if all were over, and to fetch you home."

Some of the women from the neighbouring house were summoned; and then Isabella, and the lay-sister took their way back to the convent. As they passed through the empty streets, quite deserted and solitary at that early morning hour, the sky chill and grey before the rising of the sun, and her thoughts still absorbed in the mournful story and scene which had so lately occupied her, Isabella's heart sank in dejection. She felt utterly depressed, saddened; life looked black before her; a sombre veil seemed to hang upon the coming years; a dark foreboding seized her, despite her better sense; and she could scarcely reason herself out of a vague but powerful presentiment of calamity and coming evil. She strove resolutely against this weakness—for such she felt it to be—and

partly succeeded in throwing it off; but still, temptation, sin, destruction, seemed about her path, and, dimly hovering, to cast their shadows athwart her future course.

Presently, a party of military approached, leading a heavily-ironed man, whom they were conducting to prison. As Isabella's eyes fell upon the culprit, she was struck by the singular resemblance he bore to her brother Claudio. The height, age, and general appearance were very like; and the light brown color of the hair and beard were precisely similar. She started, as the thought crossed her mind:—"Can it be my brother, that the impending ill threatens? Heaven shield my Claudio!"

Her companion, whose retired life as a nun, did not prevent her taking a lingering interest in mundane affairs, and whose profession as a lay-sister permitted her still to preserve sufficient communication with the world to admit of her satisfying her inquisitive turn, asked one of the guard, who was the criminal they were leading to prison; and she learned that it was Ragozine, the noted pirate.

"Even such a perverted being as this, might my brother have become had he early been exposed to the adverse influences, the mistaken teaching which have doubtless been this man's portion in his youth;" thought Isabella. "Courage and manly daring, made cruelty and rapine; ambition and a thirst for glorious achievement, made lawless plunder and reckless deeds; justice, consideration, devotion in the cause of humanity, made slaughter and treachery to his fellow-creatures, as his prey, rather than his brethren. A life misspent, and an ignominious death, are the sum of this man's history; and such might have been my brother's lot! Mine too, might have been no better than Nanni's, had I had only such instruction as the world awards to the lowly-born, instead of helping them to stem the tide of hostile circumstances which naturally surround them. Are there no means of averting this sore evil? Must a particular portion of humanity be acquiescently doomed to certain sin, as well as poverty? To starvation of soul as well as body? Can the intellect of the world devise no method of redemption? Will rulers ever continue to devote their energies towards fit correction of

crime, rather than diligently to seek some system for its due prevention? Might not the discovery of how best to minister timely help, be a higher aim in policy, than the most equitable code of punishment that ever was designed? O that the poor could have early succour! Wholesome teaching—moral training—right guidance! Then perchance, we might have fewer culprits, and worthier, happier citizens!"

As these thoughts passed through her mind, Isabella's attention was drawn, by the lay-sister, towards a carriage that came quietly but rapidly along the otherwise empty streets. There was no retinue; no train of attendants, no state, or guard; but the lay-sister whispered:—"That is his grace, the Duke—our exemplary sovereign, Vincentio. He is going to early mass and confession, at the monastery hard by. Ah! he is indeed a worthy prince! So young a man, yet so strict in his religious observances; so modest and retired in his habits; so devoted to study; so unostentatious in the discharge of his duties. See how he avoids parade and display in this early hour, and in the plain equipage he chooses for going to his devotions. Holy virgin mother, assoil him, and have his soul in thy especial care!" ejaculated the nun.

"Amen!" murmured Isabella, with fervour. "May he have all divine grace to fulfil his princely duties, in promoting the welfare and best happiness of his subjects. May he learn to inquire into their wants, to minister to their necessities and to improve their condition. A prince's lot were indeed an enviable one, might he effect this end during his reign. Were every monarch, at his death, to leave his people ameliorated by his acts, proudly might he listen to the praises showered on his name, and contemplate the posthumous honors with which his memory should live and be revered To be the friend of such a prince, to aid him in his views, to inspire and sustain him in such designs would be high privilege, and tempt an ambition that should make a life of peace and retirement mere cowardice and self-indulgence. Were such a post of friendship possible, it were glorious enough in its prospects of patriotism and loyal help, to make the calm happiness of a convent-life,—which I fondly hope may be mine,—seem poor in the exchange! The vocation of a worthy prince, is not unlike that of the votaress;—it is a life dedicated to a sacred cause."

Full four years had elapsed since the death of Nanni, when one fine autumn, Claudio came to his sister in high spirits, telling her he had an invitation for them both to spend the vacation at a country house, some miles' distance from the city. It belonged to a family, with the master of whom, Claudio had lately formed an acquaintance; and he and his sister were requested to join the festivities, with which, according to annual custom, the vintage was about to be celebrated.

Claudio had lately made many acquaintances, of whom his sister knew nothing. Young gentlemen,—of suitable rank to his own, but of irregular habits, and vitiated tastes; who were dissolute on principle, regarding dissipation as a duty, and profligacy as an accomplishment; who thought decorum lack of spirit, and morality a slavish restraint,—had recently won him to be their associate; and he had spent more of his time with them, and had imitated them more closely in their worst follies, than he would have chosen to come to the knowledge of his pure sister.

His respect and love for her, made him regard her esteem far too highly, to risk falling in her opinion, by letting her know that he had formed such acquaintances as these; but the family to whom he now introduced her, were worthy people, and he brought her the invitation in question, with much delight.

The brother and sister, with the rest of the guests, were welcomed, on their arrival in the vineyards, by rejoicings, firing of pistol-shots, and flourishes of trumpets and horns. Gay awnings, and arboured seats, were distributed about the grounds. Flags were flying, and the peasantry were dressed in their holiday attire, shouting, and singing, and dancing, during the intervals of their bacchanalian labour. The vines spread their flaunting arms laden with rich foliage, and richer fruitage, on all sides; proffering their luxuriance of beauty and of enjoyment.

The family-party was assembled to receive the guests It consisted of the host, Erasmus; his wife, Theresa; and their only daughter, Juliet; who supported the steps of an aged man, her godfather, Anselmo This old gentleman formed completely one of the family; for he doted to such excess on his god-daughter, that he could not live away from

her; and he had accordingly taken up his abode in her father's house, frequently declaring that she should be sole heiress of all he possessed. He was very wealthy, and not a little whimsical; but like many rich old gentlemen, his whims were tolerated for the sake of his wealth. His principal whim was, to have his darling Juliet in constant attendance upon him; he would never willingly have suffered her to stir from his side, and in deference to his wish, the young girl scarcely ever quitted it for an instant. Her parents loved to see her thus deferential, in consideration of the large fortune which they believed she was eventually securing; but her own motives in this complaisance, were, the gratitude she felt for the fond attachment towards herself, the pleasure she saw her attention gave to one so old and so dependent on her for happiness, and the real affection with which these combined feelings had inspired her for him. Hitherto, the unceasing proximity which he exacted from her, and maintained between them, had been a source of gratification rather than of inconvenience; but now, for the first time, she found this close and incessant personal attendance, irksome.

She had never before grudged the duty which held her apart, attached to the side of an old man, while those of her own age, walked, or danced, or sported about, during the vintage festivities of former years. But on this occasion, she began to wish that her godfather loved her a little bit less, that he claimed rather less exclusively her society, that he did not so wholly look to her for help and affection. For she had now for the first time met with young people of her own age, who attracted her powerfully. Both Isabella and Claudio won her regard, and drew her interest and her thoughts towards them, as no young persons she had ever seen, had done. They were of higher rank, of superior education, of more refined breeding, than any acquaintance her family had till that time made; and they seemed to Juliet, beings of another sphere—almost of another nature, from the rural neighbours, the farmers' sons and daughters, whom she had chiefly seen at her father's house until then. The high intelligence, the dignity, composure, and elevated style of beauty, which characterized Isabella, claimed for her at once the admiration of the young country-bred lady, as an embodiment of all that she

could conceive exalted and becoming in woman; while the spirit, grace, and personal advantages of Claudio, seemed in Juliet's eyes, all that could be desired to form the complete exemplar of a gentleman. Right noble did the brother and sister look, and speak, and move; and well did they credit to their gentle birth and education, both in person and demeanour.

For Juliet, she felt as though she could never sate herself with watching them, and admiring them, and noting their every word, look, and gesture. During the first day or two of their visit, she found almost sufficient pleasure in this occupation, to indemnify her for being compelled to keep aloof from them; but after a time, she longed to talk with them, to join them in the entertainments that were going forward, and to form a nearer and more intimate acquaintance with such beings, who seemed as loveable and gentle-natured, as they were loftily endowed.

But the moment she showed any disposition to move away towards the dancers, or to take part among the talkers, or to make one in a party of saunterers through the grounds, Anselmo would say:—"You are not going to leave me, Julietta, my child? You're not thinking of running away from your poor old godfather, are you? Stay by me, dear; stay by me." And one look at his fond old face, together with his voice, which quavered with age, and not with want of earnestness, sufficed to retain Juliet close by the elbow of his arm chair.

It was glorious autumnal weather, warm and genial; and the old man's easy chair was brought out every morning during the festival, and placed in a good situation on the borders of the lawn, whence he could command a view of the vineyards, and grounds, and of all the joyous groups that wandered, or sported, or danced, or idled, in them. Over the back of his chair, or by his side, hung, ever watchful and affectionate, his darling god-child; telling him the names of the guests, helping his imperfect sight with her quick eyes, bringing to him all that escaped his duller hearing by means of her acute ears, and supplying his failing senses with her own young ardour and sensibility

"She is my treasure, my joy, my sole delight;" said the old gentleman, in answer to something Isabella had said as she stood near, that she

might form better acquaintance with Juliet, whom she liked for her patient devotion to her godfather. "She is youth and health, eyesight, and hearing, every thing to me. She makes me forget that I am old—and helps me to fancy myself a boy again. She absolutely makes over to my use her active limbs, her quick faculties, her young senses; she almost invests me with her health and beauty; and goes hard to make me into a lovely young creature like herself, so entirely does she give herself up to me and my service. But, bless her, she shall find that I am grateful—yes, that I am grateful. I'll give her what is the best part of me,—my money,—as she generously bestows upon me, herself. All in good time—all in good time, though;" said the old gentleman, chuckling and nodding with a knowing air; "I can't give it her till I've done with her, for fear she should take it in her giddy little head to fly away from me, and leave me, after all."

"I think, sir, what you know—even what I know—of Juliet's steadiness of attachment for you, would ensure anything but such a desertion, whatever your kindness might see fit to present her with,—and the rather for that very kindness;" said Isabella.

"Ah, my dear young lady, I know what I know;" said the old gentleman, turning his twinkling eyes again upon Isabella, and nodding and chuckling as before; "I know very well, that when you young ladies get hold of a good round sum, you are apt to look out for some likely young fellow upon whom to bestow it; and then, goodbye to the old fellow for ever and a day! No, no, all I have shall be my Julietta's, some of these odd years—but not now—not now; all in good time—all in good time! I'm not going to risk losing the delight of my eyes—nay, my eyes, and ears, and senses, themselves—youth itself—as long as I can keep all secure. I dare say you think me a very selfish old man,—and so perhaps I am—but I can't help it. Age is apt to teach selfishness. Youth is capable of sacrifice—courts sacrifice, glories in sacrifice. At your years, I dare say I could have been as self-denying as you—but now I know better—I know better."

Isabella, whose clear perceptions, and whose love of truth, would not allow her to agree with this view of the old gentleman's, respecting his

acquired better knowledge, and yet whose respect for age would not permit her to argue with him adversely, held her peace.

"You are silent, my good young lady; you don't think as I do—of course not. What old man and young lady ever thought alike? Yet I don't blame you—I don't blame you; and I dare say you're too good to blame me—at any rate you're too polite to do so aloud. But I'm quite ready to blame myself—I own it is selfish of me to keep this dear little creature glued to my side:—if I were an old woman in reality, as I am in my weakness, and my foolish fondness, I dare say I should pin her to my gown, or tie her to my apron-string. But I can't for the life of me help it; she's so good, and so careful of me, and so dear a girl altogether, I really cannot help it. Now, can I?"

Thus directly appealed to, Isabella smiled, and said, "I think you could, sir, if you tried hard; or indeed, ever so little. But you don't try; you don't wish to help it."

"I'm afraid I don't;" said the old gentleman, with his knowing little chuckle. "It's all very well, my dear young lady, for you young people to give up a pleasure—you who have so many at command, with all your senses, and faculties, and powers, fresh and vigorous about you—but for us old folks, to part with a single joy, out of so few that remain to us, at our withered season of life, is a magnanimity—a heroism, not to be expected from our poor remnant of strength."

"You forget the compensating joy there is in the very exercise of magnanimity, of heroism; it would supply to you the one you yielded;" said Isabella; "You would be indemnified; you would gain your reward, depend on it."

"My dear young lady, you speak as a young lady; you promise me the rewards of youth. I told you before, youth takes pleasure in sacrifice—which is another name for heroism and magnanimity. You, yourself, as I have heard it whispered, are about to become a nun. This, to you appears a noble dedication of yourself to a recluse life, a wise relinquishing of the pomps and vanities of the world, a judicious withdrawal from delusion and error, a worthy offering, in short, upon the shrine of religion;—to me, I confess, it appears a sacrifice—and nothing more or less."

"In my eyes it is rather a claim than an offering, that I make; I regard it as a privilege, not a sacrifice;" said Isabella. "A life of peace and holiness, is surely a gain, and no loss."

"Ay; as I said before—or something like it—age and youth seldom view things in the same way. To my thinking it is a sacrifice—a sheer sacrifice of youth, beauty, intellect, virtue; a sacrifice of a virgin heart and person that might bless some worthy man, and the world itself, as wife and mother; a sacrifice of talents and excellences that might adorn and benefit a far wider sphere than the interior of a convent. But that's an old man's notion. I know what these things are—you don't, though you possess them." And the old gentleman chuckled, nodded, and gave his knowing look.

"And so you really intend taking the veil?" asked Juliet of Isabella. "You, so young, so noble, so happy, so"—she blushed; and checked the acknowledgment of beauty, the personal admiration, which her artless eyes plainly expressed.

"I hope to have my father's consent to my entering my novitiate among the votarists of St. Clare, before another twelvemonth elapses;" replied Isabella.

"I am sorry—that is,—I regret—I could have hoped, that our acquaintance once begun, we might have formed a friendship that would have lasted through life;" said Juliet. "I never beheld any one out of my own family, whom I feel I could love so well as I could you. I wish we were really related; then I could come to your convent and see you, even after you become a nun; and we might still be friends, as I had flattered myself with believing we might be."

"Let us fancy ourselves related; let us call each other, cousin; and look upon this gentleman as our kind uncle, whom, by some strange chance, we have never till now discovered. Will you have us for nieces, dear sir?" said Isabella, gaily.

"Indeed, will I, and right gladly," said the old gentleman. "You know I'm apt to be selfish—you were too polite to say so—but I know you thought so—come, confess, didn't you?"

"Your niece knows her duty better than to contradict her uncle Anselmo;" said Isabella, curtseying.

"Go along with your sauciness under pretence of duty, you rogue;" said the old gentleman, in a high state of chuckle; "but as I was saying —I'm apt to be selfish; and by the new-established relationship, I shall get two dear girls to love. instead of one—and moreover I shall expect a kiss a-piece from my new-found nieces. But there's one especial matter, of which I must forewarn you, niece Isabella; and that is, you must never expect to rival my other niece in my affection; for I shall never never love any one so dearly. so fondly, so exclusively, as my own little darling goddaughter, Juliet."

"Agreed; I am content to be second to her in your heart; but to no one else will I yield grade in my uncle's regard;" said Isabella.

"Second to me only in this; as in every thing else, I am avowedly second to my dear cousin Isabella;" said Juliet.

Claudio coming towards them at this moment, he was made acquainted with his new-found relations; and smiles, and good-humour, and pleasant congratulations were exchanged on all sides.

There was a large accession to the party that day. Fresh guests arrived; and additional gaiety went forward. More feasting and dancing than ever, were proposed for the evening; the shrubberies round the lawn were hung with lamps, that the ball might continue out of doors after nightfall, the weather being so warm and beautiful. It was so fine, the scene so exhilarating, and so much enjoyed by old Anselmo, that it was agreed there was no risk in allowing his chair still to occupy the position it had maintained all day; especially as his goddaughter was at her usual post to see to his comforts, and that he was warmly wrapped up.

"And let me put this cosy thing round your throat, godpapa;" said Juliet; "you know I knitted it for you myself—and this is the very time for you to wear it."

"She does just as she pleases with me, you see," said the old gentleman, turning, with evident pride and delight in her despotism. to Claudio, who was standing near, and who indeed had hovered in the vicinity of the easy-chair for the last several hours; "see what it is to be a fond old godpapa, submitting to be tyrannized over by a young hussy who knows her power but too well."

"She seems to use it very pleasantly, and very gently too;" said the young man, watching the little hands, that, spite of their being gloved, deftly arranged the folds of the comforter round the old gentleman's neck.

"Yes, yes—I don't know but I'm well off in my slavery. Like most of her roguish sex, she knows how to make her chains sit easily. They can all of 'em, bless'em, if they choose, hide the clanking, and prevent the galling of the fetters, with some magic contrivance of their own, which hardly lets us know we wear any at all;" said the old gentleman, with his favourite chuckle.

"Pardon me, sir; but it seems rather you, here, who impose fetters;" said Claudio. "Do you not enjoy the glory of attaching this fair captive to your chariot-wheels? She has not quitted the side of that triumphant car of yours—your easy-chair,—for five minutes during the day"

"Ah, ha! young gentleman, you would fain lead her away as a partner in the dance, I dare say;" said Anselmo, with his knowing nod; "but I can't spare her—I can't spare her."

"I have no wish to dance, I assure you, sir;" replied Claudio; "I am well content to stay here and swell your triumph, as another captive, enchained in pleasant talk."

"I'm afraid you flatter an old man," said Anselmo, with the sagacious twinkle of his eyes; "I saw you dancing away, with right good will, yesterday and the day before."

"I do not care to dance this evening; I think I must have turned my foot; it scarcely amounts to a sprain—but my ankle is sufficiently uneasy to make me feel no wish to dance." As Claudio said this, he could perceive, spite of the dim light,—for they were in a sort of bower of trees, which fenced and screened the easy-chair from the night-air,—that Juliet's fair head turned quickly towards him, as if in interest awakened by his words.

"Juliet, my dear child, you should yourself put something round your throat;" said Anselmo; "you know you are not accustomed to be in the open air thus late. Your shawl lies in the hall; you must put it on; I will send for it."

"I know where it is; I will fetch it, sir!" exclaimed Claudio, darting across the lawn, towards the house.

"Humph!" muttered the old gentleman, following the figure of the young man with his eyes, as it bounded over the well-lit open space; "tolerably fast running, that, for a man with a turned foot!" adding to himself:—"If it's as I suspect, I'll make so bold as just to give the young spark a hint. I'm not going to have my little Julietta lured away from me, yet awhile. No, no; all in good time; all in good time."

When Claudio returned with the shawl, he took the privilege of himself placing it round the beautiful figure he had so constantly during the last few hours found himself admiring, as it bent over the old man's chair.

"What is that you're doing? O ay,—putting her shawl on—ay, ay; you're cousins, you're cousins. Come round here on the other side of me, young gentleman; I hear best on this side; my right ear is a little deaf."

"And yet you let my cousin Juliet usually stand on that side, sir;" said Claudio.

"Juliet? O ay.—I hear her well enough; I am accustomed to her voice;" said old Anselmo. "I know its every tone by heart. I ought to do so—for it breathes nothing but love and tenderness for me; I can't spare one vibration of it for any body else. I'm well-nigh jealous of every word she gives her parents; judge if I'll let her bestow them on any one else."

"Not on her cousins, sir? Isabella will think herself hardly used, if she be not allowed a share of Juliet's words; and Claudio also hopes for his family portion."

The hand of the young girl lay on the back of her godfather's chair. The eyes of the young man had noted it, traced as it was, even though shadowed by the overhanging trees, by the gleam of the white glove it wore. He could not resist the impulse which bade him place his own upon it. At first, the imprisoned hand made a slight effort at withdrawal; but afterwards lay tremblingly still. as if its owner were unwilling to disturb the old gentleman, who rejoined:—

"Well, we'll see what can be done for relations;" and he chuckled

excessively as he placed great stress on the word; "of course, the claims of *relations* are to be considered. But as for any such impertinents as wooers or suitors, we'll have nothing to say to them, will we, Julietta, my darling? We won't spare them so much as a syllable, a single sigh. They may sigh and long as much as they will, themselves—but I tell 'em all, fairly, my little girl's not to be won till her old godfather can spare her, and that'll never be till he's in his grave Then she shall have all his money—not a penny before.—and she shall do what she pleases with it, and give it to him who shall win her and wear her. And then, but not till then, I say, joy go with her and the man of her choice, whoever he may be."

"Why not help her to make her choice, that you may be sure he is worthy of her?" said Claudio. "A man worthy of my cousin Juliet, it will need some pains to find." Here the hand that rested on hers, ventured a little pressure. "Why not give her the advantage of your assistance, sir? Why not aid her judgment with yours, and let her youth benefit by your experience?"

"Youth seldom accepts age as its guide in such matters, young gentleman;" said Anselmo, more gravely.

"But my cousin Juliet has already proved, in her affectionate attachment to your person, that she has no will but yours, dear sir;" replied Claudio.

"She will give a crowning proof of her implicit obedience to my will, if she wait until my will itself be opened;" said the old gentleman. "She will find there sufficient testimony, that I am not unmindful of the way in which she has hitherto made my wishes her law."

"Are you not denying yourself a pleasure in refusing to witness the happiness of your goddaughter, sir?" said Claudio. "Why defer, until after you are gone, a happiness which would be enhanced to her by sharing it with you?"

Here the hand which he had hitherto held enclosed beneath his own, struggled, and resolutely freed itself; but Claudio had scarcely wondered what he could have said to occasion so signal a token of his having offended, when he was re-assured by the voluntary return of the hand to

nestle itself beneath his; and how was his re-assurance raised to rapturous conviction, by finding that this little hand was now *ungloved.*

"I am the best judge of what is my own pleasure, my dear young gentleman;" said Anselmo; "and I am quite sure that it would be no pleasure to me to give up my little darling to a husband. No, no, I can't spare her; all in good time; all in good time. Besides, you talk of her happiness being assured by marriage; how do you know that she has ever yet seen the man she could love?—and she must love, before she can find her happiness in marriage. I remember enough of my youth, to know that;" said Anselmo, resuming his little chuckle. "There's no love yet in my Julietta's young heart for any body but her old godfather; I know there isn't. Surely, you don't pretend to read your cousin Juliet's heart better than I do, young gentleman?"

"I am certain of one thing, sir; that my cousin Juliet's heart is as generous and frank, as it is tender; when once it knows its own happiness may be secured by making the happiness of that man who shall venture to declare his fate to be in her hands, she will never hesitate to avow her love, while she accepts and rewards his."

"All in good time; all in good time. This will be all well enough when the man comes who is to declare it; but he shan't come, if I can help it; he shan't declare himself, while I'm alive; I'll take good care of that. I never let her out of my sight, but when I'm asleep; so he must be a brisk suitor who will outwit such an Argus as her old godfather. Ah, ah! you'll allow the lover must be very much in earnest, who shall contrive to win my little Julietta from me, mustn't he?"

"He who loves Julietta, will be earnest in his love, depend on it, my dear sir." And Claudio could not be quite sure, but he thought he now felt a little soft hand give that returning pressure, which his own had been some time soliciting.

"Ay, ay; all in good time. But bless me," said the old gentleman, "it must be very late. See, the dancing is over. They are all going towards the house. Give me your arm, my darling; and you, my good young gentleman, let me take yours also; and I will go at once to my own room. I am growing quite a rake, keeping such hours: but I always say, Julietta makes me a boy again; she gives me her youth."

The supper was over; the lamps were extinguished; the guests had all departed, excepting those who slept there; and even these had retired to rest, with the exception of the brother and sister.

The moon had risen, and was now casting her tranquil light upon vineyard, lawn, and garden. Isabella, won by the solemn stillness of the scene, which had so lately been all gaiety and merry uproar, was pacing to and fro upon a broad terrace walk, that skirted one portion of the grounds, commanding an extensive view over upland and valley. All lay bathed in the pure moon-beams, looking so peaceful, so suggestive of serene thoughts, that she could not help indulging the fit of musing hope which the hour and scene inspired.

Claudio, restless, excited, his heart full of sweet emotion, with what had so lately passed, was also wandering about the grounds, unable to withdraw to his room, indisposed as he was for sleep.

It seems that Juliet partook of the same disinclination to retire to rest, which kept the brother and sister still abroad; for as Claudio, in the course of his wanderings, turned into a path of the flower garden which led close by the house, he beheld her standing at one of the windows that opened from her room on to the lawn. She was gazing forth upon the moonlight, and stood half screened by the white muslin drapery which curtained her window; but she was distinctly visible to the lover's eye, who thought she looked only the more lovely, thus veiled amid those snowy folds.

He advanced, and uttered her name.

"You are still luxuriating in this beautiful night;" she said; "I do not wonder you cannot bear to leave the garden; I can hardly quit the window, myself; all looks so calm and beautiful."

"Will you not come forth and enjoy it for half an hour longer?" said Claudio; "my sister is in the grounds still, somewhere, I think; shall we seek her?"

Juliet hesitated; he stepped into the room, and snatched up the shawl which lay on a chair near. Folding it round her, he said: "You need not fear the night air; it is as bland as noon-day."

Juliet put her hand within the arm he proffered, to lead her forth

from the window; and they passed out into the garden. They were in no mood for speech, either of them; the scene was not one to inspire volubility; yet they talked on, as if they dared not trust themselves with silence. But suddenly Claudio said, in an altered voice,—altered from its assumed gaiety and ease, to a deep earnestness of tone:—"Tell me, Juliet, dear Juliet,——"

"There is your sister!" exclaimed Juliet at the same instant, as she sprang forward to meet Isabella.

"I have persuaded our cousin Juliet to join us in a moonlight stroll, Isabel;" said her brother; "it is impossible to go to bed such a night as this. I could be well content, for my part, to wander about such grounds as these, thus companioned, until day-break."

And it was long ere the three young people did separate; but at length Isabella's prudence prevailed; and they returned to the house, time enough to take at least a few hours' rest against the morrow.

On the following day, Anselmo was confined to the house; for, spite of all precautions, he had not escaped taking cold from so long sitting in the open air after nightfall. Close by his invalid chair, was Juliet, of course, in constant requisition, during the whole of this time. In vain Claudio hovered near; no means had he of communicating with her, or of speaking to her unobserved. The old gentleman was peevish, querulous, fretful, with his illness; and afforded no opportunity for conversation. Scarcely a look, far less any such sweet token of intelligence and regard as had passed between them on the previous evening, could the lover obtain from the young girl. It seemed as if, with the morning hours, had come discretion, reserve; a dread lest she might have been too forward, too unmaidenly bold, in the signs of preference which she had permitted to escape her; and she seemed resolved to give no more such encouragement, either to her own feelings, or to a passion scarcely avowed on his part.

Claudio fancied he could read all this in her manner; and he could scarcely endure the restraint and suspense which prevented his asking its true interpretation. His impatience increased hour by hour; almost beyond bearing, or concealment. At length he controlled and consoled

himself with the thought that evening would set her free from this bondage; and that then he would seek her in her room, where he might open his heart to her, and learn from hers what he hoped existed there for him.

"The stillness of evening, the sobered light, will better befit her timid soul in its utterance, than this garish bustle of day;" thought the lover; "I could hardly hope so frank an avowal from her, were I to seek it now, as I shall hope to gain, when befriended by quiet and dusk. Let me wait in hopeful patience."

The ailing old gentleman had withdrawn rather better, and somewhat less cross, to his own apartment; the family had also retired to rest; when Claudio took the garden-path towards Juliet's room. Both folding-sashes of the window stood wide open; and near it sat the young girl herself, her fingers loosely clasped in one another, her head a little bent, and her whole attitude bespeaking abstraction and reverie.

For a few moments, the lover indulged himself with gazing upon the fair picture she formed, sitting thus, in the softened light of the moon; then he advanced, murmuring her name.

Juliet arose, startled; then smiled, as she said:—"O, it is you!"

"Yes; forgive my thus breaking in upon your retirement; but I have been unable to approach you all day; I cannot behold you, and not long to hold some intercourse with you; your every look and word are so exclusively engrossed by your godfather, that when you are with him, nobody else can obtain one. Let your cousin Claudio claim a few moments of speech with you, now; if you will not grudge them from your subject of thought, which seemed a pleasant one, when I interrupted you, by coming hither."

"I was thinking—of—of—my cousins,—of Isabella. I cannot help regretting (I fear, sinfully) that she is about to shroud so much beauty, and so many fair gifts in a cloister. And yet she looks the vestal pre-ordained, in every particular of person and manner. How saintly pure is the beautiful candour of her face. What a majesty tempered with benignity there is in her aspect. How dignified is her step; how musical is her voice, full of the calm and self-possession of a righteous soul! She is, indeed, virtue and holiness personified. She looks so good, so elevated

above the follies and weaknesses of the every-day world, that, do you know, I, her poor little cousin, conscious of being far her inferior in goodness, as in every thing else, feel a little afraid of her, for all I love her so much, and for all her condescension in establishing relationship between us.'

"'Afraid!' you need not; Isabella is as gentle and sympathetic, as she is good; hers is no austere virtue. Those only who do not know her truly, can think it so. Besides, you do not judge yourself truly; she, who is justice itself, would tell you that you are only the more charming for this modest opinion of your own merit: that you are——"

"I ask not for my own praises;" interrupted Juliet, smiling; "we were not discussing my merits, but your sister's. Tell me, is she not cold? I know not whether it be my awe of her serene virtue, but to me, Isabella, in her cool judgment, her dispassionate purity, sometimes brings to my mind the image of the driven snow."

"You do not know her fully yet;" replied Claudio. "To those who judge her only from a first impression, she may appear devoid of warmth. But study her character truly, and you will find no lack of fervor, of generous sympathy, of all that is kindly and noble. You should see her when some exalted theme possesses her. That calm eye lights up; the still soft lip quivers; the staid form dilates—and passionate eloquence flows in a torrent from her heart and soul. She is a glorious creature! She forms my ideal of a sister!"

Juliet's eyes showed that she thought this enthusiasm proved him a brother worthy of the sister he so exalted; but reading in the eyes that met hers, how fully her own revealed the admiration she felt, she approached the window, saying:—"I wonder whether Isabella will come forth to enjoy the beauty of this night again with us; it is as beauteous as the last."

Claudio stepped to her side; his arm stole round the young girl's waist, as he whispered:—"I have told Julietta how well Isabel fulfils my ideal of a sister; shall I now tell her who forms the ideal of my love?"

"No, no; I am thinking of Isabella; let us watch for her."

"I'm well content; let us watch."

They stood thus, linked together, gazing forth upon the still night. No sound less hushed than the murmur of waters, or the light rustle of leaves, broke upon the silence which almost made audible the throbbing of those two young hearts. Night and Silence lent their aid to Nature and to Love, that their mighty voices,—mute but eloquent, gentle but all-potent,—should be heard. The moon shone blandly on; the stars shed their mild radiance, patiently and watchfully through the waning hours; but still no Isabel came. And then midnight cast her dark mantle around. The moon set; the stars faded from the sky, the grey dawn chased the lingering shadows of night, and the first blush of morning tinged the silver veil of day-break, before Claudio crept forth from the garden-window of Juliet's chamber.

It was noon the next day; when,—the party all assembled in the drawing-room, Juliet as usual hanging over her godfather's chair, in close attendance upon him, and her parents occupied in entertaining their guests,—a letter was placed in Claudio's hands. It was addressed to himself and Isabella, by their father, and had been just forwarded express from Vienna, where it had arrived on the day previous. It contained a hasty summons to his children, to meet him there immediately, as he hoped to obtain a short leave of absence previous to an intended expedition against the enemy.

The young lover turned pale, as his sister delightedly announced to the company, their near prospect of beholding the father she so longed to embrace.

"We shall be sorry to lose you, my dear young friends," said Erasmus and Theresa, "but it is natural you should be eager to join your father immediately. Orders shall be given, that you may set forth without loss of time."

While her father and mother were saying this, Juliet had ventured one look at Claudio; and then, without a word, dropped upon the floor. She had swooned.

"Dear child! dear child!" sobbed her old godfather. "Lift her gently, there, there; bear her to the window; the air will revive her; she will be better presently. She stands too long by my chair; she shall have a seat by me, in future."

When Juliet recovered, she found Claudio no longer in the room. He and his sister, she heard, were gone to prepare for immediate departure to Vienna. She strove to command herself; and steadily resisted all recommendations to withdraw, lest she might not see them before they left. She made light of her fainting; and all she could be persuaded to do, was to lie down upon the couch, which Anselmo had had wheeled over to the side of his arm-chair, for her. Here she lay, endeavouring to suppress the trembling agitation which possessed her; until Isabella and Claudio re entered the room to take leave of their friends. While his sister was bidding farewell to Anselmo, and thanking Erasmus and his wife for their hospitality, during the visit she had so much enjoyed, the lover approached the couch and found means to convey unobserved a letter into his Juliet's hands. With this treasure, the moment the brother and sister were gone, the young girl hastened to her own room, and there devoured these words:—

"Juliet—my bride—my wife!

"A mandate, you would be the last to bid me disregard, calls me from you. But I shall return with favoring nightfall. Let the secret of our loves rest within our own hearts, until such time as I can proclaim you mine with befitting triumph. I have been, till now, too unthrifty of my time and means. Love will teach me prudence and industry, that I may build a fortune worthy of your acceptance; unless, meantime, it please Heaven to endow you with the one promised by Anselmo. I shall have to watch lest the eagerness of love bid me grudge the old man his short season of remaining life. Why will age tempt youth to such unhallowed thoughts, by setting conditions to its bounty, cold, heartless, unreasonable? Why should it refuse sympathy with the ardour which itself once knew? Why not renew its own prime, by lovingly sharing its stores, while yet alive to reap a harvest of grateful affection, rather than convert to a tardy bequest, what may then be received with scant thanks, for coming fatally too late? But since your godfather wills that your dower be thus shut within his coffers, until his death frees it and you—I will not be so selfish as to withdraw you from

a home where you now command your due of ease and luxury, by asking you to share that of a poor student. We will wait until the poor student shall have earned one worthy of you, or until you yourself shall be so rich as to offer him one. You see, his presumption,—or rather his faith in your love,—allows him not to doubt that you will do so; as his own love will teach his pride to be exalted, and not humbled, in having to owe all to you. Till then, receive as your husband, in heart, in all, save ceremonial form,—and ever fondly, in fast affection,

"Your lover, the happy
CLAUDIO."

On arriving in Vienna, the brother and sister found their hope disappointed, of seeing their father already there. No tidings reached them concerning him for several days; but then a rumour came, of there having been an unexpected assault on the part of the enemy—of an engagement—of a fatal loss of officers; and among these, fell the father of Claudio and Isabella.

So sudden a defeat to all her hopes of beholding her sole surviving parent, was a shock indeed to the filial piety of Isabella. It put the crowning desire to the inclination she had always felt for a conventual life; and she besought sister Aloysia, to obtain the reverend prioress's sanction, that she might become one of the holy sisterhood without delay.

Her friend bade her think well, lest the impatience of grief was the sole motive to this decision; and whether she might not, hereafter, when time had assuaged the first violence of her sorrow, repent a step which could not then be recalled. But Isabella explained how long it had been her wish to become a nun; how she had learned to sigh for the pious calm of the votarist.

"Far from foreseeing a time when I shall regret, and desire to recall, my present determination," she said, "my only hesitation would arise from the doubt whether it be not a kind of selfishness to withdraw from the turmoil and pollution of the world, into a life of purity and peace."

The period of mourning had not concluded—many months were

scarcely passed, after her father's death, when Isabella was about to see her devout hopes fulfilled. On the very day she was to commence the season of her probation, as a novice of St. Clare, she was speaking with one of the holy sisters, concerning the duties and observances of the order, its regulations, its immunities, its restrictions, its religious exercises, its appointed hours, that she might strictly abide by them all; and she said:—"*And have you nuns no farther privileges?*"

How Isabella's vocation was set aside; how she was induced to live in the world, a duchess, instead of within convent walls, a nun, is shown elsewhere, with—

"What's yet behind, that's meet you all should know."

TALE VII.

KATHARINA AND BIANCA;

THE SHREW, AND THE DEMURE.

"The one as famous for a scolding tongue,
As is the other for beauteous modesty."
Taming of the Shrew.

"But I must and will go to church to-day, Antonia; it is the Santa Lucia; and the altar is to be decked—and there is to be a procession—and all the world will be there—and I tell you, I must go."

"But our aunt is worse to-day, you know; she must not be left alone. And remember, it is my turn to go out to-day, Claudia; and Camillo will be so disappointed, if I do not meet him; for I promised him, I would, as I knew to-day was my Sunday abroad, and——"

"O, if it be to meet your betrothed, of course, I must give up;" retorted Claudia. "No doubt, a pious duty ought to give way to a love-meeting."

"Nay, you are unjust, sister;" replied Antonia. "I merely pleaded for my turn, thinking of his disappointment, and my promise; but I must not be selfish. My aunt shall not be left, yet you shall have your wish. Go to church, dear. It is a laudable motive; you shall pray for me; and above all, for our poor sick aunt. Fetch your veil, my Claudia, and I will arrange it for you."

"You are a kind creature—you always were;" said Claudia, as Antonia arranged the folds of the veil, and fastened it with the silver pins, and ivory comb, so as to set off her sister to the best advantage; "and if I should happen to see Camillo in my way, I'll give him your love, and tell him the reason you couldn't come. Poor old aunt! I fancy we shan't have to nurse her long. Heigho! I'll pray for her. Camillo will forgive your disappointing him, for the sake of the kindness it proves in you, staying to watch by her. He says it's that unselfish goodness in you, Antonia, which makes him adore you as he does So you'll only add to his love, you see, by stopping away to-day, after all. Good-bye!"

Antonia smiled, sighed, kissed her sister, as she returned the "good-bye." Then when Claudia had tripped away, and closed the door behind her, the sigh was repeated; and for a few moments, the young girl remained lost in thought, looking through the window. But rousing herself, she said:—"I won't think of his disappointment, or my own. Let me go up to my aunt; and see whether she be ready for her 'bollitura.'"

Antonia and Claudia were two young Genoese girls. When their parents died, they had no relation, but an aunt, a widow, in a thriving way of business as a fruiterer. This aunt had taken charge of her two orphan nieces, and for some years, entirely supported them, her trade sufficing to maintain them all three in comfort But as the sisters grew towards womanhood, the aunt's health declined, and it became the duty of the two girls to return a part of the kindness they had received at her hands, by devoting themselves to the care and nursing of their sick relation.

This duty was cheerfully as well as strictly fulfilled by the elder of the two nieces, Antonia. But Claudia, the younger, felt a constant attendance by the bedside of a woman, whom age and infirmity made somewhat peevish, irritable, and exacting, to be a most irksome penance, which she made no scruple of avoiding, as often as she possibly could. The sort of means she took to avoid it, have been already hinted, in the dialogue which took place between her sister and herself.

Claudia was very much prettier than her elder sister, Antonia; but

it was strange,—and truth to say, strangest of all to herself.—that the plain Antonia had had many suitors, nay, was actually betrothed to one, her own choice, while the pretty Claudia had never been able to boast more than a few passing flirtations,—heart-smitten admirers of a week or so,—but not one bona-fide proposal. She thought so charming a face as she beheld every day in the glass, needed but to be more seen, to bring a host of lovers; and this it was which made her so anxious to frequent the most crowded places, when she did go abroad.

The church of San Lorenzo, on a saint's day, was sure to be the most thronged, and most fashionable of all resorts; and besides, Claudia was quite a devotee,—in her way; she knew all the embroidery on the priests' robes by heart; was enthusiastic in the fineness of the lace round the altar-cloths; doted on the velvet with which the pulpit was hung; was thoroughly versed in every pearl in the waxen madonna's necklace, and every gem on her petticoat; was learned in processions; could tell every saint's day in the calendar, off-hand; and was ready for every feast, moveable or appointed, long before its arrival. Nay, she saved up her pocket money scrupulously, to put into the 'tronco dei poveri;" only, it sometimes happened, that a bright ribbon, or a tempting new kerchief, would dwindle the destined 'liri' into a few 'soldi.'

On the day in question, she had no sooner entered the church, than she perceived that her usual seat was occupied by a remarkably good-looking young man; who, however,—on her approaching with a helpless, embarrassed air, plainly bespeaking her perplexity and its cause.—immediately gave up the place he occupied, drawing one of the rush-bottomed wooden-backed chairs from the nearest stack, and setting it for himself not far from her.

This courtesy on the stranger's part, necessarily produced some on hers. She offered her missal, seeing that the young gentleman was unprovided with a book. She held it between them; and when some of the little coloured prints (of saints with up-turned eyes, or of several small fat, flaming, cross-laden hearts, toiling up a hill, with dabs of crimson to represent bleeding footsteps) that were put into the missal as markers, occasionally fluttered out upon the pavement, as they would do, and as

they seemed to take a perverse pleasure in doing, Claudia would hurriedly stoop to pick them up; and then the young stranger would gallantly prevent her; and then, when he recovered it, and attempted to replace it, Claudia would help him so awkwardly, and with such trembling fingers, that the little picture was in danger of tumbling down again, and then Claudia would colour a good deal, and look in a terrible state of pretty confusion.

All this improved their acquaintance amazingly; so that by the time mass was over, nothing seemed more natural than that the young gentleman should offer to see her home; and when she protested she could not think of giving him so much trouble, he could do no less than assure her that it would be something very different from trouble to him; and when she said:—"Well it was not far, to be sure," he was called upon to say that "were it situated at the very farther extremity of Genoa city, he should only be the better pleased;" and after many of the like remarks—no less unexpected, than brilliant and original, she permitted him to escort her to her aunt's house; which led to a request on the young gentleman's part that he should be allowed to call on the morrow, to enquire after her health, and that of her sick relation. In short, this day's church-going produced what Claudia had so earnestly desired—an offer of marriage.

The young man announced, that his name was Baptista Minola, son of signor Minola of Padua; that he was now at Genoa on business for his father; that he was about to return home; where he would be sure of a double welcome, could he bring so charming a bride in his hand.

The match was concluded; madame Minola took leave of her aunt and sister, and set forth with her husband for Padua, protesting with much obliging unction, that she should be always glad to hear of their welfare; that she wished her aunt's speedy restoration to health, and hoped it might not be long ere her sister was married to her lover, Camillo. "He is not a gentleman born, to be sure, like my Baptista;" said she to Antonia, in the flow of considerate feeling towards her sister, inspired by her own superior good fortune; "but he is a very worthy young man—an excellent workman, I dare say; and his exertions will doubtless suffice to support you both very comfortably, when you marry. I hope it may

be soon for your sake, Antonia. Nothing is more distressing for a girl than a protracted engagement, and a long deferred wedding. I trust you'll soon be able to send me word that you are a happy wife—as I am."

"My aunt's state of health, will not allow of my thinking of quitting her: and heaven forbid, that I should owe my happiness to the death of one who has been so good to us, as she has been;" sighed Antonia. "I fear Camillo and I must not think of marriage for a long time yet awhile."

When the bride and bridegroom were departed, the sick woman called her niece to her bed side, and said—"You are grieved at parting with your sister, my Antonia; but we must not regret her, her happiness is assured. It is the thought of yours, and of how it may also be secured, which occupies me now. I know your attachment for Camillo; his for you. I know how it has been made subservient to your dutiful attention towards one who has had it in her power to benefit you. I know how often you and he have given up your natural desire to be in each other's society, that you may not let my comforts, or my tendance, be lessened. This ought not to be. But I have not the courage to give up my nurse, my Antonia, my dear niece. I have thought then, that if Camillo will endure the presence of one whom age and infirmity render less patient than she ought to be,—if he will consent to the infliction of a burden for the sake of the girl he loves,—if he will help her to share its weight, that he may secure her society, without withdrawing her from the duty which gratitude and her own good feeling impose upon her,—if, in short, he will receive us both to his home. I have considered how it may now be arranged that your union shall be no longer delayed. The amount of my hoarded savings I had intended to bequeath in equal shares to my two nieces. Claudia's marriage with a man so well off as her husband is,—the son of a rich Paduan gentleman,—renders it unnecessary that any of my money should go to her; and the two portions combined, together with what Camillo's skill and industry can command, will amply suffice to maintain such a home as your moderate wishes could desire. Why then tarry until death shall have put you in possession of this destined sum? Why not accept, instead of inherit it; and give me the happiness of enjoying it with my children, instead of the barren comfort of leaving

it to them when I am gone? Let us induce Camillo to think with us, and then we may all live as happily together, as an enfeebled frame, and the task of ministering to its wants will permit."

It may well be imagined that the young couple were not slow to avail themselves of their generous relation's offer; and they determined that the affection and zeal with which they would make her future happiness their care, should best prove their gratitude, and make her feel that she had gained double tendance by the kindness with which she had given up her nurse to be the wife of the man she loved. In the wedded home of Camillo and Antonia, the sick and aged aunt was rewarded for the protection she had formerly bestowed on the two orphan girls.

Upon the occasion of her marriage, Antonia wrote to her sister at Padua, informing her of her happiness; and expressing trust that its knowledge was the only thing wanting to complete that of Claudia.

Claudia sent a congratulatory letter in reply; which concluded with a hint that her sister had proved her wisdom in abiding with a relation who had wherewithal to recompense attachment. "But do not let the thought of having deprived me of my share of our aunt's property, disturb you for a moment, Antonia;" the letter concluded; "I assure you, I have the greatest pleasure in ceding to you whatever portion might have been mine, could I have resolved to pain a worthy man's heart by refusing to be his, on a plea of staying to watch by a sick relation. I should wish you never to reproach yourself with having supplanted me in my aunt's affection; I have that of a kind, an indulgent, husband, to console me. Nor would I have you reflect upon yourself for having been the sole recipient of her bounty. You want it, I do not. I dare say a turner of olive wood does not make so large an income, but that a generous aunt's contribution to the household must be a consideration—an important advantage. I rejoice that you have it, sister. As for me, I have an establishment far beyond what my poor humble merits could have entitled me to. And lately, signor Minola's death has made us even richer than we were before. The good old man left my Baptista all he was worth—and if ever there was a saint in Paradise, that dear good old man is surely gone there. That you may enjoy the result of your assiduity

and vigilant care, unalloyed by one sting of self-reproach, my dear Antonia, is the sincere wish of your

Affectionate sister and humble servant,

Claudia Minola."

For some time, no farther communication took place between the sisters. After a period of a year or two, however, another letter reached Antonia from Padua. It ran thus:—

"Dear sister,

"Although so long a time has elapsed without your having found time or inclination to write to me, I will not reproach you with your negligence, or do you the (perhaps) injustice to believe that you are indifferent to what concerns me. On the contrary, I will flatter myself that the news of a circumstance I am about to impart to you, will give you as much gratification as it does me. My husband's position and fortune, the importance of his connections, and the considerable wealth he possesses, makes it very desirable that he should have an heir. Hitherto, my hopes of bringing him one, have been frustrated. At present, I have a prospect of their being realized. My daily and nightly prayers have been granted; my unwearied applications to the saints, strengthened and directed by the pious exhortations of my confessor, father Bonifacio, have been at length heard, and through their holy intercession, I am about to be blessed and to bless my husband, with offspring. We had some thoughts of asking you and your husband to stand godfather and godmother to the expected baby; but we have since felt it our duty to offer the compliment to a neighbour of ours, a landed proprietor, and octogenarian. His name is signor Gremio; he has only one son, a tall sickly man, who has overgrown his strength, and whom the doctors think unlikely to live. What a terrible thing, the prospect of losing an only son! I already feel by anticipation the power of sympathising with poor old signor Gremio. To lose an only child, must be almost as bad as to be disappointed in the hope of having an only child at all! I am sorry to hear that you, sister Antonia, have no prospect of becoming a mother. Ah, my dear! it is a blessed prospect, believe me. If you or your hus-

band should think of treating yourselves at any time with an excursion to Padua, with what joy I shall place my dear little expected son in your arms. But I suppose you will not think of leaving our dear aunt, poor old soul! Well, you do quite right not to give her up; she has made it worth your while to show your attachment to her. You were always a wiser-headed girl than your poor little sister, Claudia. Discretion, gravity, steadiness and prudence in the discharge of your worldly duties, were always a part of your character, Antonia. Humility, with a meek hope of recommending herself to the guardianship of the saints, was ever the utmost aim of her who subscribes herself

Your devoted sister,

Claudia Minola."

With unfeigned pleasure, Antonia received these tidings of her sister's prosperity; though the old smile was repeated as she read Claudia's self-complacency under the guise of self-depreciation; inuendo under that of commendation, triumph under that of pity; while the old sigh was breathed again, as she owned that the pity was needed. The one blessing of children had been denied their home; and the want of that one blessing had rendered their domestic joys incomplete, even in their fulness.

But the happiness they had hitherto possessed was suddenly interrupted by the death of the good aunt. She was sincerely mourned by Antonia; who, attached to her by the double tie of gratitude, and affectionate care, felt her loss deeply.

Camillo therefore, was well pleased when another letter arrived from madame Minola, inviting her sister to Padua to stand godmother to the baby that was now born; as an unexpected circumstance had altered their views with respect to asking old signor Gremio's sponsorship.

"I suppose they have found out the old gentleman's coffers to be less well stored than they imagined;" thought Camillo; "or possibly, the son may be pronounced in better health, or be about to marry, and the estates discovered to be entailed—or some equally potent reason for making the senior signor Gremio a less eligible godfather to the heir of the Minolas

than was at first supposed. But however that may be, I am not sorry they have asked my Antonia to be gossip on the occasion; as the change will do her good. She shall set out for Padua immediately."

Antonia would fain have had her husband accompany her; but he pointed out that he had not been included in the invitation,—that he could not well manage to leave business for a mere pleasure-trip,—and that it was as much as they ought in prudence to afford, the cost of her journey, and the necessary outlay for a christening-gift.

"Thy sister is quite right in supposing that an 'cbanista' is no rich trader, Antonia;" said he smiling; but it makes the compliment her affection pays us, all the greater, in wishing to have thee for her child's godmother; I'm right glad to see Claudia hath so much good feeling. Her babe shall have the richest-carved cradle I can send her."

Antonia was received with much show of hospitality and kindness by Baptista Minola and his wife; but it struck her, that in her sister's manner there was a strange embarrassment, when she begged to see her child.

"I long to see the little fellow—to clasp him in my arms—to hug him, and tell him how glad I shall be to have him for a godson, dear Claudia; where is he?"

"The child shall be brought forthwith—sit down Antonia—thou must needs be tired with thy journey. Some wine and fruit shall be set here in the orchard, till the more substantial meal be ready."

But at this moment, the nurse approached, bearing in her arms a small recumbent individual, swathed into a stiff bundle, adorned with knots of ribands, who could be no other than the heir of the Minolas. It was plentifully be-hung with relics in proper preparatory christening-trim; and had been duly deluged with holy-water, until the necessarily deferred ceremonial could take place.

Antonia exclaimed "Here he is! Give him to me, nurse!"

"'He,' ma'am! It's a she, ma'am! It's no him, but a blessed her —a little girl, ma'am!" said the nurse.

"Yes, it's too true, Antonia;" said her sister. "My expected son proved to be a little girl, after all. It's a sad disappointment; we could

not think of asking signor Gremio to be godfather to anything less than an heir, you know; so we put off begging him to become sponsor till another time. Next baby, we shall hope to be more fortunate. But we thought you wouldn't mind a girl, and so——"

Madame Minola stammered, and left her speech unfinished; but her sister hastened to relieve her. by the assurance that the baby would be no less dear to her for being a girl than a boy. and that she was quite as much delighted with a goddaughter as with a godson.

"How like the world that is!" murmured madame Minola. "It takes but a one-sided view of most things—a limited—a merely selfish view! Of course it can signify little to you. as a godmother, whether your godchild be a girl or a boy; but you forget what a mother feels on such a point. True, you are not a mother yourself, and can therefore little enter into the force of a mother's feelings. Still, I think, you might have expressed a little more sympathy with your sister's disappointment, Antonia. You might have felt, that she naturally sighed to present her husband with an heir to his large property; but you always were cold and prudent—vastly more so than your poor sister, who cannot help feeling warmly where she loves. I own I am so attached to my husband, as to regret bitterly not having brought him a son—but doubtless you are wiser in your coldness, than I in my warmth. Besides, it is the saints' will—(at least, this time)—and to that I submit."

"And how do you mean to name the little creature?" said Antonia, bending over it, to conceal whatever emotion her sister's words might have called forth.

Why, Baptista at first thought of calling it by yours, as a compliment to godmamma; which, of course, was all very kind and considerate on his part; but I told him I knew you had too much good sense to feel hurt, if I preferred having it called according to a very particular wish of my own."

"And what is your favorite name, my sister?" asked Antonia.

"O it is not a mere favorite name—one name is well-nigh as pretty as another, for that matter; it's no such frivolous motive as that, which determines me, I assure you, sister;" said Claudia with a look of injured

innocence; "I should have liked your name very well—as it's the same with our blessed St. Antonio of Padua—the patron-saint of our city; but as the babe was born on the feast of Santa Katharina, I should like her to be called after that holy martyr. So my husband has consented to give up his whim in deference to my wish. Certainly, its proceeding purely from a pious motive, entitles it to some consideration."

Claudia paused, for some assent to her last proposition; but as her sister offered none, she proceeded.

"It is rarely that I find any one take things in the same fervent point of view that I do; I remember of old, Antonia, you never sympathized with my ardour for church-going,—my zeal in the endeavour humbly to fulfil my religious duties; it is scarcely to be attributed to you as a fault; we are not all constituted alike; some are of a more enthusiastic temperament than others,—and certainly, the phlegmatic rationality, and cool-judging prudence of your character is far more philosophical, and far more useful, in a worldly point of view, than my ardent and impulsive disposition. But I am content to be as I am, and to set my heart upon things not altogether mundane."

She here heaved a soft sigh of self-satisfaction, and paused again; but finding that Antonia still preserved silence, she went on.

"As I was saying, few people contemplate things in the far-viewed and earnest way that I do. Now, if I thought that calling my child Antonia would propitiate the patron saint of our Padua, so that he would send me a boy next time, to present to my husband, I would have her baptized by that name at once; but upon mature deliberation, and after frequent consultations with padre Bonifacio, I am induced to think there is more to be hoped from naming her after the holy virgin-martyr, Santa Katharina, on whose festival she was born."

However, madame Minola's hopes of a son were destined never to be realized. Whether owing to an error in the naming of her first-born, or not,—certain it is, that her second child was also a girl. The poor lady took this reiterated disappointment (looking upon it as really quite a pointed thing on the part of Fate and the Saints, after she had taken such anxious pains to discover the best means of conciliating them) so

much to heart, that she sank into weak health; and even her boasted energy in church-going could not avail to rouse her from her easy chair which she thenceforward constantly occupied. But she solaced her pride of devoteeism, by continual interviews with her father confessor; in padre Bonifacio's presence, in his ghostly exhortation, in his comfortable counsel, she strove to cherish that warmth of zeal, on which she had always so much plumed herself.

By the time her two little girls had reached an age most to require her active superintendence, she had become a confirmed invalid; never leaving her arm-chair, but for her bed; or her bed, but for her arm-chair.

The elder of the two, Katharina, was a spirited, lively child, whose unchecked sallies were fast becoming flippancy; whose glibness of retort, and unbridled freedom of tongue were speedily leading her into insufferable pertness. At first, the child's quickness caused her to be laughed at, and encouraged in her proneness to make saucy answers; but gradually they were found to be annoying, rather than amusing; rude, instead of droll and pretty. But there was no judicious mother, to train the insolence into sprightliness, to subdue the malapertness into harmless mirth, and to soften the character, by teaching her to mingle gentleness and kind-meaning with her native vivacity—which might thus have been mere pleasant and winning playfulness.

Instead of forming her child's disposition, and giving a wholesome tendency to such points of character, as might have grown into attractive qualities, with proper restriction and worthy culture, madame Minola was deep in some controversial discussion with father Bonifacio on the relative merits of St. Poppo and St. Macarius; as to whether the latter saint's pious zeal in courting gnat-bites, or St. Simeon Stylites' singular taste in lodgings, deserved the greater reverence, and emulation; in doting upon the humility of St. Anthony, who took to mat-making, or the never-sufficiently-to-be-admired St. John Chrysostom, who, with a conscience more queasy than his stomach, 'used the same stinking oil for his food as his lamp;' and sometimes she would discuss another holy man's bland opinion respecting the span-length of those infant souls

condemned to an eternity of torture. While she should have been watching the defects in her child's temper, and striving to counteract them by substituting or developing better feelings, she was engaged in reading the lives of the saints, or listening to a history of the miraculous transit of the house of Loretto.

When the defects had ripened into faults, for want of early discipline and care; when, of the child who might have become a merry-hearted creature, with enough of roguery in her sallies to keep all those about her on the alert, and who might have won all their loves with her raillery and playful replies, was made a pert unpleasant chit,—then she punished. Punishment, strict, summary, and inexorable, was resorted to, for a cure of those evils, which ought rather to have been timely prevented.

Bianca, the younger, was a child of totally different disposition. She was quiet, watchful, and unopposing. That which exasperated her more petulant sister into angry retort, or furious defiance, she would receive with a meek shrug, or a placid remonstrance. She shrank from contention; avoided scrapes; evaded difficulties. She seldom provoked censure, and always contrived to escape correction. She was so passive, that she seemed to have no will; but she could be meekly stubborn, and had a remarkable method of getting her own way. She made no show of determination, but she rarely failed of compassing anything she desired. She seemed incapable of resistance, yet generally succeeded in effecting none but her particular plans. She never appeared to contest a point with any one, but somehow, all yielded to her wish. She had quite a neat little faculty of her own for gaining her ends, together with the good will and liking of everybody. She was a general favorite; her unthwarting manners, her innocent air, her mild speech, her soft, deprecating looks, rendered her popular, and secured her a universal good word. All were ready to give her a good character. She passed for very obliging, though she used little exertion for any one; but then she never offended any body's prejudices. She had a reputation for gentleness and modesty; for she scarcely seemed to have an opinion of her own—and certainly never bluntly expressed one. People thought her

full of sweetness, because she had none of her sister's tartness,—which always particularly shocked her: and found her very amiable, since she never affronted them, or wounded their self-love.

Bianca's being so shocked at Katharina's defects, gained her immense credit in public opinion; it placed her beyond all suspicion of sharing or countenancing such misconduct, and avouched her own superiority. Public opinion ranked the one sister as highly, as it rated low the other. It took the two girls on their own estimate of the value of its regard. Katharina cared little for the world's opinion,—slighted it, —set it at defiance: while Bianca bent to it,—deprecated its censure—courted its approval, in her every demure word and look. The world requited each of them, accordingly.

One of the persons who especially excited Katharina's dislike, and who, in consequence, was frequently the object of her impertinence, was padre Bonifacio. She did not dare treat him thus in her mother's presence, knowing how highly esteemed the confessor was by madame Minola, but she took every other opportunity of marking her contempt.

If he passed her, coming in, or going out, of the house, in return for his murmered "Benedicite, child!" she would make the 'jettatura' at him, or look over her shoulder towards him, and say:—"You're there, are you? How do?" or nod slightly, without so much as glancing up, saying:—"Good-day: good-day!" This, the worthy gentleman scarcely observed; partly, because he was deaf: partly, because he thought the pertness of the child not worth notice: partly, because his spirit of meekness forbade resentment.

Once when he called her towards him, and, placing his hand on her head paternally, gave her some message for her mother, she slily put up her hand, and held her nose, while he continued speaking. The good man did not perceive her having done so: but her sister Bianca did: and when he had departed, asked Katharina what was her reason.

"The odour of sanctity was too much for me;" replied she. "I'm not worthy to stand so near it, I suppose. Of course, the reason friars

wear baize gowns, is because woollen retains fumes well—the fume of holiness."

"For shame, sister!" exclaimed Bianca; "what would our mother say?"

"She would have me whipped, to teach me a keener relish for wholesome smells; but it'll take a great deal of whipping to make me bear the same amount of sanctity that she can. But then, she's so very good, you know; and I'm always naughty—at least, if I'm to judge by the many whippings and penances I get."

At last, Katharina forgot herself to padre Bonifacio in her mother's presence. She was running into her mother's room to call Bianca to dinner. Seeing the confessor there, she exclaimed "Ah, you're there, are you? How do? How do, and good-bye,—for dinner's serving, I'm hungry, and the sooner you're gone the better."

"How now, child! Is that the way you speak to the holy father! I'm amazed at you! If ever I hear such a style of addressing his reverence again, you know what shall be your punishment."

"Yes, yes, I know;" then turning to the padre, she repeated "Good-bye, good-bye! And good-bye to my dinner too;" added she; "for I know I shall have to dine off dry bread now."

Dry bread for dinner was so frequently her punishment, that she tried to strip it of its terrors, and to vent her indignation against it, by turning it into jest, and inventing witticisms upon the subject. On one occasion, when her father bade her to come to table, she curtsied saucily, and said, "Thank you, pa'; but I don't dine at home to-day; I dine at my ordinary."

"Thine ordinary, child! What dost mean?"

"Dry bread; that's my ordinary; I ordinarily dine upon it; and ordinary fare it is, I can tell you!"

Once her sister passed her, while she was eating her allotted portion in a corner, and she said:—"Look here, Bianca! Here's bread! such dry bread—bread that I don't ask for—but they give me a stone; it's as hard as a stone. Hardly I'm used by these stony-hearted creatures!"

"Remember, you speak of our parents;" said Bianca.

"I thought parents were to treat their children tenderly!" retorted she. "Here's tender treatment! Here's tenderness for you!—no,—for me! Here's softness! Here's delicacy! Why it's like a brick! I can't get my teeth into it. I shouldn't be surprised if it were to break them. Marble or granite,—more fit to pave a church, or build a bridge, or a jail with, than to feed a daughter upon! It's a week old, if it's a day. No wonder it makes me crusty; I shall turn into a crust, if they give me much more of it."

Another time, she gave her mother a hint of her disgust, by inserting a clause in the prayer she was repeating by her side. Madame Minola was very scrupulous in hearing her children repeat morning and night a long string of words arranged into prayers; but which she never gave herself the trouble to explain to them, nor thought to ascertain whether they understood the spirit and meaning of that which they uttered. They were even allowed ignorantly to parrot the most divine of prayers.

Now, when Katharina came to the petition for 'daily bread,' she added:—"with meat to it."

"Profane child!" said her mother.

"Well, I do wish I could now and then get my daily bread with some butter upon it, or a handful of fruit, to help me down with it; it does stick in my throat so, day after day, you can't think; it is so very dry and daily."

In short, poor Katharina was becoming, fast, a settled naughty child; a little reprobate, hardened in her contumacy,—her rebellious ways of thinking and speaking. Always in disgrace; never repenting. Perpetually being punished; never amending. Her insolence, her pertness, her bad-temper, seemed to be given up as a hopeless case. She was looked upon as incorrigibly perverse, altogether disagreeable, and incurable. A domestic nuisance—but irremediable, though intolerable. People shrugged their shoulders, and endured her—as well as they could. She became an object of universal dislike and avoidance.

About this time, her godmother, aunt Antonia, came to Padua on a visit.

Madame Minola made many pathetic complaints to her sister, re-

specting the plague Katharina's unhappy disposition was to them all; bemoaned herself that she should have given birth to such a wayward wicked child; and wondered what she had done to deserve such an infliction.

"For an infliction she certainly is, sister. Her naughtiness makes her odious to every one. But, I fear, there's no help for it."

"Why so, sister? She may be reclaimed, and made a comfort to you and her father, as well as to every one else, herself included. For the poor little thing, as she is, cannot be very comfortable or happy—to be thus at variance with all her friends."

"Oh, as for her—I've no concern for her discomfort; she don't deserve that I should. A perverse, ill-conditioned, troublesome little hussy! I've no patience with her!" said the mother.

"I fear so;" answered the aunt quietly. "But . cannot see why she might not be made a better child; she is naturally high-spirited—full of vivacity—these form an admirable basis for character, if only directed properly. A friend she could esteem and respect might do much with that nature, or I'm greatly mistaken."

"Esteem! Respect! She has neither, for any one! Why, she does not respect her parents—or even padre Bonifacio! She minds nobody—she's utterly graceless and worthless; and hasn't a notion of obeying anything but her own whims of pertness and insufferable rudeness."

"Might not some better notion be instilled into her? Might she not be taught regard for others;—deference, obedience, docility? It is hard to set down one so young as incorrigible. It is dangerous to give a child a character for any particular fault; it too frequently fixes the attribute. A child hearing itself constantly called sulky, or indolent, or headstrong, or pert, will learn to consider itself so, and come to act upon the character it has received. It acquires the habit of thinking of itself thus, and to believe that there is no use in attempting to be otherwise. It finds no better expected of it, and becomes confirmed in its original defect; which probably, by other treatment, might have been destroyed, —or at any rate, weakened."

"It's all very fine talking, sister;" returned madame Minola; "you

were always famous for thinking you could perform a duty better than any body else. But try the child yourself; and you'll soon see whether she's to be made anything of, except the pert rudesby I've told you she is."

"I will try, my dear sister, since you give me leave;" said Antonia; "I will try to win her confidence—to see if I can't bring her to speak a little with me. She may be more tractable than you imagine. We have not seen much of each other, hitherto; but I am not without hope of leading her to love her aunt and godmother."

"Do as you please, sister;" replied madame Minola. "I'm sure, if you've any fancy for taking a troublesome brat in hand, I shall not hinder you. But you always were famous for liking to undertake disagreeable tasks. You found your account in one, certainly; I wish you equal success in this."

Antonia was a staid sensible woman, with an inexhaustible stock of patience. When her niece Katharina found that she bore with her pert manners, never reproached her about them, never made them matter of remark, but answered her words quietly, and with entire disregard of the flippancy which too often accompanied them, she gradually dropped her insolent tone, when they spoke together; this led to a greater ease; the ease to a sense of comfort; the comfort to a feeling of liking for the person with whom she was thus comfortable; and so on, until she grew to entertain a stronger regard for her aunt Antonia, than she had ever before felt towards any human being.

When Antonia perceived that she had established this feeling of preference and confidence in her niece's mind, she ventured gently to remonstrate with her, as one friend might do with another, upon such points of her character, as most needed admonition.

"My dear child, what makes you behave so contemptuously to padre Bonifacio?" said she to Katharina, one morning, as they sat together at work in the parlour, through which the father confessor passed on his way to madame Minola's room, upon observing the little girl give him one of her impertinent nods.

"I don't behave contemptuously to him. I don't care a fig about him. I detest him."

"Why should you detest him?" said her aunt; contenting herself with replying to one only of her inconsistent sentences.

"O, I don't know—I hate him—he has such a smeary voice; such nasty wheedling ways; such a creeping step. When he throws back his cowl, he has drops dotted all over his bald head—like rain on a cabbage-leaf; and he wears such a filthy old baize gown. I hate the very sight of him."

"But have you never considered that his presence gives your mother great comfort; that she esteems and reveres him; and that it must give her great pain, to see him treated with rudeness?"

"I don't treat him with rudeness—that is, I don't care how I treat him,—for I loathe him—a dirty old man!"

"But your mother sees something in him besides a dirty old man. She sees an attached friend, a faithful guide, a kind pastor; one to whom she is accustomed to look up for counsel and assistance; one whom she regards with veneration and gratitude. Ought not you to behave towards him a little more in accordance with her opinion of him, than with yours? Do you not think it would be well to try and see him in the light that she does, for her sake?"

"Why should I try to oblige her, when she's so cross and unkind to me?" said Katharina. "I never go near her but she scolds me, or finds fault with something I say or do. Why should I do any thing to oblige her?"

"Because she's your mother;" said Antonia emphatically.

"I know that, of course; but"—Katharina was proceeding; but as she looked up, she caught her aunt's eye fixed steadily upon her. There was a grave earnestness in its expression, that the child could not withstand, and her own eyelids drooped beneath the gaze.

Presently she said in a low tone:—"Mother's so peevish."

"So might you be peevish, had you as much pain to bear, as she has. Night and day,—day after day, and night after night, your mother suffers many hours of racking pain. When you are calmly sleeping in your bed, she tosses to and fro, restless, weary, wakeful with her pain. When you are running about the garden, happily playing, your limbs in

action, your spirits gay, she is confined to her invalid-chair, vainly seeking to find a respite from pain, even in repose. Well may she be fretful, having to endure so much, from which there is scarcely a prospect of release, save in death. The time may come, my dear Katharina, when, too late, you may wish that you had never been the means of adding to all this pain she has had to undergo; that you had borne her fretfulness better; that you had never been guilty of disrespect towards her. You will then regret having ill-treated one whom she regards."

"I will try and think of this, when next I see padre Bonifacio;" sobbed the little girl; for she was crying now, at her aunt's words; "I'll try and behave better to him; indeed I will."

"Come to me, my dear child;" said her aunt, soothingly. I would not have given you this pain, but that I knew it would rouse you to better feelings, and better conduct. My little Katharina does not want for an affectionate heart; and that will teach her to be all we could wish, in time."

And so, perhaps, it might have been; had that heart continued beneath the guidance of the judicious friend who now sought to awaken its gentler impulses. But the attempt had scarce been made, ere it was unavoidably abandoned. Antonia was suddenly recalled to Genoa by a summons from her husband, who had injured his hand with a sharp-edged tool; it was feared, so deeply, that there was a doubt whether he would ever recover its use sufficiently for future work. Thus it proved; and Camillo's inability to labour for their support, involving the necessity of his wife's exerting herself to earn bread for them both, prevented her ever returning to Padua.

By this unfortunate occurrence, the first beneficial influence that had ever been exercised over Katharina's mind and heart, was withdrawn: the patient care, the winning kindness, the gentle yet earnest words which might have curbed all that was wrong, while they fostered all that was generous and right, were removed; and the poor little girl, in the weakness of unaided childhood, soon fell into her former petulance, and wrong-headed ways.

Before, however, the effect of her aunt's visit upon Katharina had

faded, her mother suddenly died. The unexpectedness of the event; the remembrance of her aunt's words; this speedy fulfilment of what they had hinted at as probable, combined to overwhelm the child with remorse. She felt with all the keenness of her vehement nature. She suffered the tortures of an accusing conscience, when she remembered her frequent insolence to the mother who was gone for ever. She writhed with the pangs of self-reproach and unavailing repentance, as she recalled how often she had been disobedient, rude, and disregardful to the suffering invalid, who would never return to the sick chair she had so long occupied, and before which Katharina now flung herself on her knees, in a transport of vain sorrow.

She abandoned herself to the most passionate grief. Her pillow that night was literally wet with her tears. She flung herself to and fro in the terrible unrest of remorse,—even worse than that of sickness, which had been her mother's. But as she thought of the many wakeful nights that mother had passed, thus, like herself, unable to get peace or ease, her tears and sobs burst out afresh.

Her sleepless night sent her with white cheeks, swollen eyes, and choking throat, next morning, to the breakfast-table.

Her sister placed food before her.

"How d'ye expect me to eat, when my throat's full? I can't swallow," she said.

"Thy grief's too shrewish-violent to last, I fear me, Katharina;' said her father. "Thou wert ever too untoward with thy mother when she lived, to let us think thou mourn'st her very sincerely now she's dead. Dry thy crocodile tears; and have done with this show of grief."

O words of reproach! No mustard-grain seems smaller seed, yet what fearful sowing is yours! Words of reproach lightly let fall, yet yielding poisonous blossoms! Words of reproach, dropped unheeded, yet bringing forth deadliest fruit! And no soil so fatally sure to nurture them into this baleful maturity as the domestic hearth. Let those who would preserve home in peace and happiness beware of even the shadow of reproach. It is thistle-down for seeming insignificancy—but of like insidious propagation. It is gone with a breath—takes flight, and is

forgotten by him who carelessly puffs it forth; but it scatters mischief, and generates evil.

Her father's reproach roused all that was bad in Katharina's disposition. Those tears of hers, might have been turned to gentle account; her young sorrow might have been the means of drawing her to softening thoughts, and worthy resolutions: but she was taunted with them as insincere, when she knew them to be genuine; she was reproached with them as a pretence, when she felt they were only too true; and she resolved henceforth to hide them,—to struggle with them,—to crush and repress her sorrow as something that was misunderstood by others, and painful to herself.

As a natural consequence, she grew more hard and saucy than ever. She was not only acerb and disrespectful in speech; but she indulged in all sorts of perverse contemptuous ways. She would go about the house on a Sunday, between mass and vespers, with a needle and thread stuck on her side, or with her knitting-pins peeping from her apron-pocket; and if remonstrated with, would reply:—"Well, I haven't been working, you know; I've been to mass as well as you."

On a fast day, she would make a parade of throwing a beef-bone, or a mutton shank to the dog; and when the expostulation came, which she hoped would follow, she gloried in answering:—"The dog has no soul, I suppose? Where's the harm of letting him have a meal of meat? He needn't fast; it's quite enough, methinks, if we do."

A letter addressed to her father, was allowed to wait several hours in a corner on a table; and when he asked her why she had not mentioned it to him, she said:—"You told me to hold my tongue, this morning; how should I speak to you, or tell you anything? How did I know but you might bid me be silent again; or chide me for being officious?"

Another time, when a lad brought him a message, Katharina happening to open the door, slammed it to again in the messenger's face; and afterwards this was her excuse; "You said you wouldn't be disturbed; how should I dream you didn't mean what you said? If you knew your own mind a little better, I might know how to please ye, mayhap!"

"Thou hast a parlous curst temper of thine own, girl, that's a sure thing;" said her father. "Why canst not take pattern by thy sister? See how biddable and mild she is. Canst not try to be like her?"

"No, I can't; and what's more, I won't. I wouldn't be such a piece of bread-and-butter goodness as she is, even if I could. Why, if a wasp were to settle on her hand, she'd allow it to stay and sting her, rather than brush it rudely away. She'd let a mad cow toss her, before she'd frighten the poor thing by flirting a kerchief in its face. Her toes might be trodden upon till they were smashed flat, ere she'd hurt a person's feelings by begging they'd mind where they were stepping. None of your spiritless milk-and-water virtue for me, I thank ye, pa'!"

"Better an' thou hadst a little of her want of spirit, perhaps; thou hast far too much of thine own, child. But thou'lt never be as good as she is!" said the father.

"Heaven forbid!" she replied.

"Thou pray'st amiss, wench; well would it be for thyself—and still better for us all, wert thou likely to be but half as good. But e'en that much, thou'lt never be."

"Never!" she exclaimed. "Never; so long as you keep holding her up as a pattern and a model to me. I hate model people. They're odious in themselves; odious in their popularity; for ever perched up on a brazen pedestal of conceit and approval."

"Go to; I'm weary of thy froward humours;" said Baptista. "Begone, I say, and send thy sister hither to me."

"Thank you, pa', for dismissing me; I'm as weary of my stay, as you can be. You don't send me from you more willingly that I go, I promise you."

There was a large entertainment given at the country-house of signior Gremio, to which signior Minola's little girls, among other young people, were invited. The old gentleman had made the party a juvenile one, in compliment to his son; whom he considered still a boy, though he was past forty years of age. The octogenarian had so long been in the habit

of looking upon him as a child, compared with himself, that he really thought of him in no other light. The son had always been called young signior Gremio, to distinguish him from his father; and this had farther helped the notion.

There was to be dancing; sports and games of all kinds; and a tent was spread in the grounds, with refreshments, and a cold collation. The old gentleman bustled about with as much animation as his tottering limbs would allow; rubbing his hands, and taking great interest in seeing that all his young guests were duly amused.

"Where's my boy?" he would exclaim at intervals; "Oh, yonder; I see him. Among that group of lads, watching their game of mora; but he should be over here, helping me to receive his young lady guests. But he'll be here presently, my dears; never fear, never fear."

"I don't;" said Katharina.

"That's very good of you, my dear. And when he comes, I'll make him get up a dance, and he shall be your partner. But, you see, I don't like to disturb him from what amuses him; it's natural for young people to amuse themselves; yes, yes, I can make allowances; young people will be young people."

"Not always,—sometimes they're elderly;" said she. "But I suppose you can make allowance even for elderly young people. When he's as old as you are, perhaps he'll be more steady;" added she, glancing at the old man's shaking head, and trembling hands.

"I'm afraid you're a bit of a rogue, Miss Katharina;" said the good-natured old gentleman, not willing to perceive any malice in her observation; "you're a wit, quite a wit, I declare,—and wits are apt to be sad rogues."

"That's not saying much for their liveliness;" said she. "But here comes your middle-aged man,—your boy, I mean."

"My dear boy," said his father, "here are some young ladies dying with impatience for a dance. Set one afoot, pr'ythee; and set their pretty feet in motion, as soon as may be,—there's no time to be lost."

"No truly;" said Katharina; "our dancing days may be too soon over."

"Will miss Bianca favor me with her hand?" said the son, with a flourish of his hat under his arm.

"My sister has too much grace, to like to see grey hairs stand uncovered before her;" said Katharina. "Pray put on your hat, signior, lest you take cold in your head."

"Fie, sister; how can you?" murmured Bianca, as she put her hand into the gentleman's arm; who led her away, looking mightily disconcerted.

You mustn't be left without a partner, my dear miss;" said the old gentleman to Katharina. "Let's see what we can do for you. Here, Giulio!" cried he, calling to a young lad, who was cracking and eating 'pignoli' at a little distance; "come hither, child; and offer thy hand to this young lady.

The lad lounged towards them, glanced at Katharina's face, and said, "I'm afraid."

"'Afraid!' I shan't eat it;" said she.

"I don't know that;" he answered. "You look as if you'd snap at anything, that comes in your way. I shouldn't wonder if you'd bite my nose off, an' I said anything you didn't fancy."

"Like enough;" said she. "If you deserved it, you'd catch it, I promise you; I'm not one to stick at anything when I'm affronted; I care not who knows as much."

"'Catch it?' Catch what? Some of your bites or scratches, I suppose; but as I've no fancy for scars, I shan't trust my skin near you, nor offer my hand to any such miss Miscetta, I thank you, miss Minola."

"Do you call me a cat, sirrah?" said she, with sparkling eyes.

"Gently, gently, my good master Giulio; are these your manners to a lady?"

"I see no lady;" said the lad.

"Well, well; to this young gentlewoman."

"Nor gentlewoman neither; certainly, no gentle woman."

"Well, well; to this little girl. Dear, dear, what am I to do with these quarrelsome children!" exclaimed the old gentleman in great perplexity. "My dears, will you do me the favor to be good, till somebody

comes to help me make you friends? will you be so obliging as to keep quiet, just for a minute, till I can call somebody to part you? O, here, son Gremio!—I'm glad the dance is over; you're come in happy time to preserve peace. Our young friends are falling out, I fear me."

"Come you with me, Giulio;" said the younger signior Gremio; "let you and me go seek some refreshment for these young ladies; they must need something cool after all this heat and dancing."

"Bring some 'cedrata,' or 'limonata;' they are iced, and will be pleasant;" said his father.

"Better a little 'semata;' are not the others too sour, think you, sir?" said Giulio; "we have acid enough, already."

"Be off with ye, child; and do as my son would have you. He'll find what is fitting, and nice. I'll warrant me;" said the old gentleman, pushing the boy away by the shoulder; but unable to forbear smiling.

"Pert monkey!" muttered Katharina.

"Never mind him, my dear;" said her host. He doesn't mean any harm, bless you; it's only his joke. Giulio's always full of his jokes. My son don't mind him. My boy rather likes him; they're quite friends and comrades."

"I wish he'd keep his jokes for his friend, then,—and for those who like 'em—I don't;" said she; "and if he treats me to any more of them, I shall just ——"

She was interrupted by the return of the younger signior Gremio with some fruit and cakes, which he presented to the sisters.

Katharina had no sooner helped herself to some strawberries, than master Giulio stepped forward, and pouring some cream over them, said mischievously, "mew, mew; have a little milk, pussy?"

The next instant, the whole contents of her plate were chucked in his face.

"My dears,—my dears,—pray—pray!" said the old gentleman.

"Now why should she be so enraged when I liken her to a cat, if she didn't feel the truth of the portrait?" laughed Giulio, who had burst into a roar of enjoyment, as he received the deluge of strawberries and cream "I'll be bound her sister wouldn't be angry, though, if I should

tell her she were like a cat,—and yet she has nearly as much of a cat in her, as 'tother."

"Who I?" said Bianca, in soft wonder.

"Yes, you, you; mew, mew;" said the boy, mimicking her way of speaking. "You sit there, with your fore-feet primly before you; your eyes opening and shutting demurely winking; your sleek looks, and your pur-pur-purry voice. And then you've got such velvet paws;" said he, touching the back of her hand.

They couldn't help laughing, Bianca included.

"Are they so very soft?" said she, smoothing her hand against the boy's ruddy cheek.

"Yes; I hope they conceal no claws;" said he.

"Don't make too sure of that:" said Katharina; "velvet paws can put forth talons as sharp as razors,—and that, when you think it least."

"At any rate, they're kept in reserve;" said he; "they don't appear till occasion calls them forth; even that's better than those horrible claws which are displayed at all seasons, unsheathed, and menacing ready to rip and rend on the slightest provocation; those frightful cats, with their green eyes, swollen tails, and backs always up; constantly prepared to spring upon you at a moment's warning."

"At any rate, they put you on your guard;" said Katharina, "which is more than can be said for the velvet-paws. The one makes no secret of her being ready to fly at you, if you offend her; the other lies in wait to attack you, and give you a sly gash, when you least expect it."

"But I confess, of the two, I prefer the velvet-pawed cat, to the fierce, green-eyed, spread-clawed cat; if you'll permit me a choice, miss Miscetta Minola;" said he.

"I have heard that men prefer the animal that creeps stealthily and demurely, all innocence in her looks, pretending to be thinking of nothing, while the whole time she's watching how best she may pounce upon his weaknesses;" returned she; "and I suppose you, sir boy, affect to ape their taste. I care nothing, not I, for your tastes or your preferences; but I'll thank you to call neither my sister nor myself, a cat, any more; and I give you fair warning, that if you hint at such a thing again, I'll

give you as sound a box o'the ear, as you can well imagine, with all your fine fancies, of claws, and paws, and green eyes."

"No, will you really, Miscetta?" said he.

Slap came a swinging cuff against the side of his head: but as he only laughed, and repeated "puss, puss, puss," a shower of blows followed; and grasping a few clumps of his hair in one hand, she fairly belaboured him with the other, until signior Gremio the younger, assisted by one or two of the other guests, came to the rescue, and drew her off.

Giulio was still roaring with laughter, as he shouted, "O never mind, let her alone, she'll soon tire herself. See, the bird is still unwounded by Kate Cat! He has strength left to fly out of pussy's reach." Saying which, he sprang up, caught hold of some low branches of a tree just above his head and swung himself up among them. Here he remained carelessly dangling his legs, and whistling; while he pulled some more 'pignoli' out of his pocket, and sat contentedly cracking and eating them.

By-and-by he varied his amusement by pelting the company with the shells; slily contriving that the major part of them should hit Katharina.

She looked up wrathfully. "How dare you?" she said.

"You'll see how I dare. Don't ye like it, Miscetta?"

"If you do it again, or say that again, I'll have my revenge;" said she furiously.

That same second, the words were repeated; and the next, a large stone that lay at Katharina's feet, was picked up and flung violently into the midst of the tree.

It hit him. It struck his temple; and stunned, he fell forwards. There was a rustle among the boughs—they fortunately broke his fall—and then the lad dropped to the ground. The guests started up, in consternation; ran towards the spot; and raised him in their arms. Blood was oozing from the wound in his head; but he was insensible.

This incident abruptly broke up the party. The guests withdrew, holding up their hands, and exclaiming at the ungoverned temper of the little girl who had occasioned the accident; the young lad was lifted into the house, and laid on a couch, while a surgeon was sent for to examine his hurts; the two signior Gremios deplored the unfortunate conclusion

of their entertainment, and addressed themselves to the recovery of their young friend, despatching a servant to conduct Katharina and Bianca home.

As they walked along in silence, Bianca whispered;—"What a shocking thing to have happened! I shall dread it coming to father's ears; he'll be so angry. Yet it's my duty to tell him; for I suppose you won't?"

"Why should you suppose so? I shall;" said Katharina.

A pause.

"He's badly wounded, I fear; did you see the bleeding dent upon his forehead, where the stone hit him, sister?" said Bianca.

Katharina shuddered; then recovering herself, she said:—"What did he torment me for, then? I told him I'd be revenged,—if he went on so any more. He had fair warning."

"If the boy should die?" murmured Bianca.

How can I help it? It's his fault—I told him I'd have my revenge; and I took it. But don't be afraid—he'll not die—such disagreeable hateful boys as he, never do die."

"But if he should;" softly persisted Bianca.

"Pshaw! he won't. I tell you. How you worrit, Bianca; and harp upon a thing, when you've once said it. He'll not die, never fear."

"I have no cause; it's you who have to fear, sister, and who ought to fear;" said Bianca.

"But I don't, you see;" said Katharina. And here the matter ended for the present.

However there it could not end, eventually. The boy, thanks to his youth and his good constitution, did recover; but signior Baptista was so shocked at the injury that his daughter's rashness had caused; he was so much vexed at the scandal, which this public exposure of the violence of her temper occasioned, that he resolved upon a step which he hoped might have the good effect of reforming her, while it offered the present advantage of removing her from the observation of society. He determined to place his two daughters as pensioners in a convent, for the finishing of their education.

There were two convents near; both highly famed for the young ladies' schools attached to them. One had the name of extreme simplicity, even to plainness, in its appointments; of strictness and rigour, even to austerity, in its ordinances. The other was said to be more lenient in its regulations; and consequently was more fashionable, more in favor among those who styled themselves 'the leading and genteel families' of Padua.

At first, signior Baptista, in hesitating to which of these convents he should send his daughters, rather inclined towards the austere one, as more likely to effect the cure which he desired in his contumacious child; but at length, considering himself to be among 'the leading men' in his native town, and wishing his girls to take their place among the genteel young ladies of Padua, he decided in favor of the more fashionable establishment. In his deliberations, he did not ostensibly shape his conduct by these motives; on the contrary, he told himself that it was because he did not think it was fair to punish Bianca for her sister's faults by sending her to a rigorous school, though such a one might be advisable for Katharina; and as for the latter, why, he could always hold the more austere convent as a threat in reserve, should the other fail in bringing her to a suitable state of decorum.

Katharina and Bianca were accordingly placed as boarders among the ladies of the Holy Petticoat; such being the name of the fashionable sisterhood, in honor of a relic of great virtue and sanctity, which they possessed,—a portion of a sacred garment miraculously preserved and bequeathed; while the rival convent was known as that of the Sisters of Humility.

On the first introduction of the two daughters of signior Minola, they were presented in great state to the lady Abbess, who was condescendingly affable; and made a little speech to them, full of affectionate unction, and coaxing patronage, telling them she was sure they would prove shining ornaments to the holy community of which it was now their privilege to form a part.

We're not going to become nuns—don't think it;" abruptly exclaimed Katharina

"You would not be fit to become a nun, my child, with that rebellious tone of yours, which I fear betokens something of a rebellious spirit. But we'll soon set all that to rights; we'll soon tame down that wicked little lion of a spirit, till it becomes a lamb, a very lamb." And the lady Abbess smiled through her set teeth, and smiled through her half-closed eyes, as she looked at Katharina with a placid consciousness of power.

"There's very little of a lamb in me, as you'll find;" said Katharina; "a lamb ends by becoming a sheep, and I've no notion of settling down into a fleecy fool, to be sheared, driven, slaughtered, roasted, and eaten up."

"'Very little' there may be; and I fear, 'very little' there is; but that little we'll find out, my child, depend on't; for all our sakes. Saint Agnes be praised! thou hast been blessedly sent hither, amongst our holy flock!"

"Not to be a nun, I tell you!"

The lady Abbess again smiled through the row of teeth between her slightly parted lips, and smiled through her half-closed eyes, as she surveyed the figure of the child, standing there with clenched hands, flushed cheek, and defiant look.

There was something in the expression of quiet, assured triumph, with which the Abbess sat thus regarding her, in silent superiority, that galled Katharina to the quick.

She stamped her foot, and repeated "Not to be a nun, I tell you!"

"Umph?" said the Abbess in a silvery tone of enquiry, as if she had not heard what had just been said, in the loudest and most violent of voices.

"Not to be a nun, I tell you!" was again repeated in a shriek.

"Sister, sister, remember it is the reverend lady Abbess you are speaking to!" interposed Bianca.

"What's that to you? or to me? Why need you interfere?" And a smart slap of the face followed.

"Tie that little vixen's hands behind her;" said the lady Abbess in a bland voice, to one or two of the nuns who stood nearest. Katharina kicked and struggled; but it was done.

"It was my intention to have given a little feast to welcome these

two young ladies among us;" resumed the lady Abbess; "but since the elder has seen fit to conduct herself in a manner as unexpected as it is reprehensible, she shall not be permitted to partake of the festivities, but shall be satisfied with dry bread."

"Ah ha! Dry bread! My old friend—or rather, foe! But it's too stale a punishment to frighten me. I'm become accustomed to it. 'Satisfied with dry bread!' Why, it'll be quite a regale to me, for old acquaintance' sake."

"And not only shall she have no other dinner than dry bread," proceeded the Abbess, with the same smile, and in an even tone, as if she were conscious of no interruption to her last speech, but were going on in continuation.—"not only dry bread, which in itself, as an inaugural dinner, would be disgrace enough to a child of feeling; but you will be so good as to see, sister Brigida, that she eats it in presence of the whole school, while they are enjoying the dainties I have provided for to-day's little festival."

"See if I eat it, though! I'd rather starve," said Katharina.

"And now, remove her;" added the Abbess, with her smile, and her even tone.

The scene in the refectory was such as had never before been witnessed in that place of discipline and order.

First the young ladies were marshalled in, Bianca among them, and took their places at the dining-tables; a nun presiding at the head of each, a teacher at the other end, with lay sisters in attendance, to hand the plates, and fill the drinking-mugs.

Then the prisoner, Katharina, was ushered in, between two meek-looking nuns; she was brought to the centre of the room, and placed at a small table, upon which was a thick slice of bread upon a trencher.

But the moment her hands were untied, that she might commence her dinner, the first use she made of them was to skime both bread and trencher to the other end of the hall.

There was a look of amazement at her daring, upon all the school-girl faces turned towards her.

The meek-looking nuns refastened the knots upon her wrists, picked

up the trencher and bread, and brought them back; but no sooner replaced before her, than table, and all, were knocked over with one kick of her foot.

The school-girl faces expressed increasing interest in this singular exhibition of bold and persevering defiance.

"Reverend mother insists upon her eating it; she enjoined me to see her will performed;" said sister Brigida.

The meek-looking nuns again picked up the bread; broke it into morsels, and put some of them to Katharina's lips. She took one into her mouth, chewed it hastily, then sent forth the fragments in a shower of crumbs.

There was a titter ran through the ranks of scholars. The nuns began to feel there was danger to the solemnity of their supremacy, rather than salutary terror, in the example. They hastened, therefore, to put an end to the scene, by procuring an order from the Abbess, that the refractory new-comer should be lodged forthwith in a certain solitary chamber, devoted to the reception of culprits convicted of heinous offences.

Here, shut up in darkness, and debarred from all society, she was left to reflect upon her errors, and to learn repentance. She did neither; but she suffered intensely. The confinement enraged her; the silence oppressed her; the darkness dismayed her. At first she tore about the narrow space like a little wild thing, thumping at the doors, wrenching at the windows, and beating madly against the walls; then uttered shriek upon shriek, demanding in frantic shouts and screams to be let out: then she sobbed passionately, and flung herself upon the floor, striking and scratching at it, as if she would have dug herself a passage through. Then she raved aloud again; and then listened for an answer:—but when no sound reached her, in reply to her outcries, the echoes of her own voice seemed to mock her, and the silence that followed was like an insult. It irritated her with its mute contempt: it so completely baffled her spirit of resistance, her love of contest, and opposition; she would fain have had it take a tangible shape that she might have struggled with it; she ground her teeth at it in impotence of rage and defeated will

Gradually, its continuance frightened her; it seemed to vanquish her by its sheer passive pertinacity; she felt quelled and subdued by its monotony. Its effect was aided by the darkness which surrounded her. Her screams subsided into moans, her sobs into sighs; and she lay panting and trembling, cowering down in a corner. But she never once repented of her fault—she never once confessed to herself that it was her own violence which had incurred this punishment; she only blamed their injustice, accused their tyranny, who had subjected her to such cruelties, and resented their having the power to inflict them. She would not own that her misconduct had caused her this suffering; but she resolved that in future she would be more guarded in her behaviour. She did not intend to set about curing herself of insolence, or insubordination; but she thought she would henceforth take care so to keep them within rule, as not again to draw upon her the terrors of that dark solitude.

She kept her resolution tolerably well. She put severe constraint upon herself, so that her outbreaks should not come beneath the immediate notice of the lady Abbess, or any of the nuns who were mistresses in the school. She with great difficulty reined in her tongue when she came in contact with the former; for there was something in that smile through the half-closed eyes and teeth which peculiarly stung her. When she met it, directed towards her, she felt every fibre tingle, every pulse quicken, every drop of blood throb and rush to her fingers' ends. But she learned to master the show, at least, of contumacy, lest she should offend one who had power to order her to the dark room. Her violence of temperament was smothered; but it was not extinct. Radical cure of a bad passion is not effected by such means. Subjection is not conviction. Fear may induce the show of submission, but through reasoning affection alone, is genuine compliance obtained. Tyranny but inculcates the meanness of hypocrisy—the expediency of apparent yielding. Love only can truly subjugate a haughty spirit. Through love alone and its divine teachings are evil feelings to be eradicated, and virtuous emotions implanted in their stead.

There was just now another chance for this little girl to have been

redeemed from her defect of disposition; but like the former one, its influence was lost to her.

In the chapel belonging to the convent, there hung a picture of the marriage of St. Catherine. It represented the virgin saint, kneeling at the feet of the infant Saviour. By her side was the symbol of her martyrdom, the torturing wheel; but her face shone with holy fervour, hope, and extacy, as she bent to receive the ring of espousal from the hand of the sacred Babe, who leaned from his mother's lap to place it upon her finger. First, Katharina came to regard this picture with curiosity, as being that of her patron saint; then she came to admire it for its great beauty, and the glories of its painting; then she loved to linger near it, and gaze upon it, for the sake of the benign expression upon the maternal countenance, for the sake of the radiant sweetness in the smile of the Babe, and for the sake of the happiness she felt in watching the look of hope, of joy, of heavenly aspiration on the face of the virgin-saint, her namesake. It seemed a comfort, a delight, to let her eyes rest upon so much of tranquil, unearthly gladness as shone there. She felt the turbulent sensations that usually agitated her soul, lulled and soothed, and set at rest, by looking upon this picture. She felt better, as well as happier, while she gazed; and she would often linger behind her companions, when they left the chapel, that she might stay and enjoy the delicious frame of mind into which the contemplation of this picture threw her. She would sit like one entranced, forgetful of time; the nuns, her schoolfellows, her daily vexations, her petulances, grievances, ill-humours, all and everything, faded from her view; she beheld nothing but the picture,—felt nothing but the beatitude it inspired.

One evening, after vespers, when her schoolfellows had all retired, she remained thus absorbed, and was sitting in her usual trance of delighted contemplation, opposite the picture, when one of the nuns, who had missed her, returned to the chapel in quest of her.

"So, you are here, my dear child;" said the nun, in the confidential whisper peculiar to her vocation; "neither sister Fidelia, nor sister Brigida, nor sister Lucia, could imagine where you were; and they want you in the school-room; and they sent me to seek you; and to tell you that——"

"I wish you wouldn't hiss so;" interrupted Katharina, to whom the whispered chatter of the nun was insupportable, jarring as it did with her then mood of mind; can't you speak out what you have to say—and not ish-sh-sh-sh there, like a serpent."

"A serpent? Holy mother forbid!" ejaculated the nun, crossing herself hastily. "Far be it from me to bring anything belonging to the enemy of mankind here. Not even the hiss of the old gentleman ought to approach this place. But you know, Katharina, my dear, it isn't seemly to speak loud in chapel; so I must whisper what I have to say."

"And what have you to say?" said Katharina.

"Why, I told you before; only you're so pettish you never give yourself time to listen to what's said. They want you in the school-room for evening lessons."

"Pshaw! lessons! I was studying better here. I wish they wouldn't disturb me."

"Studying? you mean, praying, I suppose; chapel isn't the place to study in. Ah, I see! you were praying to your patron saint, blessed Santa Katharina. Only you should kneel to her, and not sit lounging there in your chair, when you pray."

"I wasn't praying;" replied she.

"What were you doing here, then, child?"

"I told you; studying. I was studying that glorious face, to get it by heart. It does me good; and I should like to have it always with me."

"What do you mean, child? Studying a saint's face? getting it by heart? What bold, heathenish ideas! But it's of a piece with your sitting, when you ought to be kneeling before the blessed picture."

"It is a blessed picture; but I feel its blessedness better when I'm sitting, than when I'm kneeling. My knees get stiff and cramped, and the pain distracts me from the sensation I have of the blessing of looking upon that face.—upon all the faces, for they are all beautiful and blessed."

"What a strange way you have of talking, child! Somehow, you shock me, with your odd manner of expressing yourself."

Katharina did not reply; she was again lost in rapturous contemplation of the picture.

Suddenly she said:—"I have found why the face of the Madonna so delights me. It is just such a kind, gentle, good face as my aunt Antonia's. It is very like her. It never struck me till this moment; but it is very like her."

The nun started; again crossed herself; and exclaimed—"Santissima Madre! What are you saying? It absolutely horrifies me to hear you attach such mundane notions to the picture of our blessed lady. Come; let us leave the chapel. If I hear any more such profanity, I shall have to report you to the Superior."

Although the nun did not actually carry a formal complaint to the lady Abbess about Katharina's profane ideas respecting this picture, yet in the tittle-tattling way which grows upon those nuns whose originally-limited supply of brains dwindles down to a mere nothing, in the round of trifles to which it is for the most part confined in its exercise, the matter soon got wind. It was whispered about, that Katharina had strange fancies of her own about the picture in question. A grand mystery was made of it—as of all occurrences there, however trivial.

In a convent, as on board a ship, during a long sea-voyage, minutest incidents become important; the slightest events assume interest; insignificant things are magnified into marvels of curiosity and investigation. A gull flying near the mast-head—a knot of sea-weed—a passing cloud—are noteworthy objects to passengers, weary from very idleness, on the look-out, and prepared to be grateful, for anything that may vary the monotony and inactivity of their watery journey. So, a frown of the lady Abbess, a significant cough of one of the nuns, a hem more than usual, or more than can be accounted for by a cold, from one of the teachers, is sufficient, to put a whole convent-school in a state of animated discussion for days. "Is it a bead mis-told? Can it be that inadvertent gape of Laura Pigrizia, last evening at complin? Do you think it was observed? Foolish thing! How could she do it? Or was it that careless toad, Nina Trascura? Did you hear what a lump she let her missal fall, t'other morning? just as father Pietro was beginning the 'Asperges'!" &c. &c. &c.

With still keener interest was the rumoured story of Katharina's odd notions about the picture discussed. There was a general huddling together, a closing of bended heads, with whispered confabulations, and stolen glances in her direction, when next the school-girls repaired to the chapel.

Katharina felt that she was observed,—watched; her wrath was rising; but she stifled her indignation as well as she could, knowing that such an indecorum as an outbreak in chapel would be severely punished. She sat therefore, biting her lips, swelling, and swallowing; compressing her hands till the nails cut against the palms,—almost to pain; casting, now and then, scorching glances at her companions, in return for their inquisitive looks.

But the moment service was over, and the chapel was quitted, she flamed out.

The tribe of girls was pouring forth into the play-ground, down a flight of stone steps which led into it; they tripped by twos and threes, some hand-in-hand, some with arms clasped round each others waists, some flying alone, but all rushing onwards, eager for play, and chattering at the top of their voices.

Presently, high and shrill above them all, sounded that of Katharina Minola.

"Stop! Come back, all of you! I want to speak to you! Stop, I tell you!"

Involuntarily they checked their steps, and stood in groups around the base of the stone staircase, at the head of which was Katharina, surveying them.

"What were you all staring at?"

A pause; while the troop of school-girls looked at each other, disconcerted.

"What were you all staring at, I say, in the chapel to-day?"

Still no answer; while five or six girls who had unwittingly lingered behind their companions, and were thus standing near Katharina, suddenly made a dart past her, and flew down the steps to join the rest.

"Just like sheep, I declare!" laughed she, scornfully; "what one does, the other does. But what were you all staring at, to-day, I ask once more? I should say you stared as hard as eagles, if anything so sheepish could look like the king of birds."

"I suppose you mean to say you're like the sun, if we stared like eagles;" screamed a giggling voice from among the crowd below.

"Who said that?" said Katharina, darting a piercing glance into the midst of them; "let her come up, whoever it was, and say it again, to my face, and see if I won't pitch her right down from top to bottom of the steps."

"It's all very fine, twitting us with staring; why you yourself will outstare an eagle,—or any body else, when you're in one of your tantrums!" said the same giggling voice, which was echoed in such myriad giggles and titters, running through the bevy of school-girls, that it was impossible for Katharina to distinguish the speaker. All at once, the giggles subsided; and a sudden gravity stole over the upturned faces.

Katharina, who was scanning them eagerly, perceived the change; and also, by the direction of their eyes, saw that it was caused by some object immediately behind herself.

She turned, and beheld the lady Abbess; standing close to her elbow, with arms folded, and person drawn up to its full height. Confused thoughts of flinging herself against the reverend mother, of upsetting her, and tumbling her headlong down the flight of steps,—even a keen sense of the pleasure it would be, to see one so dignified and imperturbable, bundling helplessly over,—flashed wildly through the brain of the child; but a second glance at the face and figure of the Superior, suffered to show even her impetuosity the folly of any such attempt. The shrewd glassy eye, all the more stern for the cold smile with which it gleamed through the quivering half-closed lids; the compressed lips, the set teeth, the folded arms, the firm erect mien, all told the utter futility of hoping to move—either physically or morally—such a woman.

She stood thus for some moments, transfixing her with those sharp

slantwise glances; until she seemed satisfied with their effect, and knew that they had gained her the mastery. Then she said, in her even voice —"I have heard something of this. And so you do not like to be stared at, Katharina Minola? Then you should learn to comport yourself a little less singularly, my child. We will take order that it shall be so. You shall learn to pray before a holy picture, as other people do, not study it; and then perhaps when you affect no singularity, your companions will not be disposed to wonder at you, or stare at you; you will be spared that, my child, if it affront you. I am willing to spare the feelings of all my flock as much as may be, and I expect, in return, that they will not offend me by affecting singularity, which I hold to be a sinful and dangerous vanity."

"I don't affect—I hate affectation—I——" stammered Katharina.

"Be silent, my child, while I speak;" interrupted the lady Abbess. "In order that you may obtain an insight into your error, and learn to regard that picture in its proper light, I desire you will repeat a thirty days' prayer, together with the seven penitential psalms, upon your knees, morning and evening, fasting, in front of that sacred picture; and may this penance serve to cleanse you of your past sin, and inspire you with better and more fitting thoughts for the time. Pax vobiscum; et benedicite, my child!"

"But I can't,—I won't"—began Katharina passionately.

"You will either perform the penance I enjoin you, or go into solitary confinement for a week;" said the abbess, as she withdrew. "I would fain be lenient. I give you your choice, my child."

Nothing less than the threatened terrors of the dark room, would have induced Katharina to go through with the other penance. As it was, she performed it; but how? In a spirit of repugnance, of mutiny, of all that was destructive to salutary effect. She kneeled, it was true; but with heart unlowly, unreverential, full of indignation and rebellion She repeated the appointed words, but it was with distracted attention, thoughts wandering and inappropriate. She resented the compelled utterance of what she felt to have no consonance with the ideas she attached to the picture. She abhorred the mechanical repetition of these

sentences that carried with them no one echo of the emotions inspired by gazing on those sublime countenances. In the constantly recurring unwillingness, and disgust of her task, in the sense of its unsuitableness, its uselessness, its very mockery, as it seemed to her, she learned to associate feelings of discomfort with the picture itself; and by the time her thirty days' penance was concluded, she had come to look upon it with nearly as much reluctance, as she had formerly gazed with eagerness. The holy awe, the tender fascination, with which this painting had once inspired her, might have been made the source of chastening self-examination, of worthy endeavours; but it had been turned into a means of tyranny and wrong teaching, and the opportunity for future good was lost. Passionate temperaments are apt to be influenced by Art. Their very ardour and susceptibility render them peculiarly open to impressions for good or evil through the senses, the imagination, the intellectual faculties,—all of which are appealed to, in high Art. A fine painting, a solemn strain of music, might produce powerful effects upon such a disposition as Katharina's; while upon one of softer mood, it should produce nothing beyond a perception of beauty. Had the strong hold which that picture originally took upon her feelings, been carefully fostered, wisely aided, and holily directed, it might have wrought her incalculable benefit, remoulded her character, and developed its excellences; but a pernicious bias had been given, and the very strength of her original impressions had made the harm done, the greater. Ever after that period, Katharina as earnestly shunned, as she had formerly sought, looking upon that picture.

And now the annual distribution of prizes was about to take place. For many weeks previous, the school was in a bustle of preparation. There was to be a grand exhibition of the works of the school; recitations of poetry, and singing in parts, were to be given by the young ladies. Parents were to be invited, that they might see their children show off, and receive the rewards of merit, and of emulation; to say nothing of those that might be due for vanity, envy, and malice.

It was a striking feature in this display, that all works of utility were omitted. Nothing but fancy-works, works that would *show* well, were

included among those got up for the occasion. Of course, during the long period of preparation for all this, every kind of useful lesson or solid acquirement was set aside, to give time for the heaps of show-things that it was necessary to achieve.

Nothing was to be seen but pieces of satin, and silk, taffeta, lute-string, and brocade; beads, coloured papers, tinsel, gilded bordering, spangles, gauze, palettes dabbed with the gaudiest of paints, drawing-boards, cards, fillagree, bran, embroidery, floss-silks, worsteds, wools, ribbon, ivory, shells, feathers, wax, lace, pencils, paint-boxes, silver and gold wire, thread, cat-gut, gum, paste, varnish, bugles, gilt-foil, muslin, tissue-paper, velvet; all kinds of smarteries in material.—all possible variety in bits, shreds, scraps, morsels, and small quantities.

And then, by degrees, this mass of trumpery was formed, modelled, and made up. Beneath the diligent fingers of the young ladies, aided by the skill and invention of the nuns, it shaped itself into innumerable objects of almost indescribable appearance, and of utterly indescribable and undiscoverable use, but which were collectively to be displayed as the works of the school—and to form that grand exhibition, upon which the hearts of the young ladies and their parents were so fondly fixed, as the result of their year's schooling, and the source of the forthcoming prizes. There were pincushions—vast numbers of pincushions—of every size and shape; but the favorite kind of pincushion was a singular fabric of crimson satin crammed with bran, fashioned three-corner-wise, the two upper points of which being strained across the top and fastened together, the whole was supposed to form a striking resemblance to that mysterious organ, the human heart. This,—to be dangled at the side, by a long ribbon,—was considered a useful present to a faithful servant, or favorite nurse; at the same time that it afforded an affecting typical assurance of the fond attachment for home maintained by the young lady during her school-life. Upon the whole, perhaps, the pincushions were the most useful objects there; at any rate, there was a definite and specific use to which they might be put. But for the most part, the articles constructed, were purposeless; utterly devoid of any conceivable aim or avail whatever. There were boxes so small that they would

contain nothing; boxes so fragile that they would hold nothing; boxes with such inadhesive sides, insecure handles, and limp, untenible bottoms, that they were fit receptacles for nothing but dead flies or dust. There were heaps of artificial flowers, with nearly as little the shape, or hue of nature, as the smell; set under glass cases. There were waxen effigies of lambs, or babies, embedded in myriad fillagree curls, closely wedged in flat boxes with glass lids. There were 'suonarelli,'—or rattles, made with patchwork, and gilt tape. There were 'pazienzi,'—nondescript things, supposed to be of great virtue, hung on the side, or round the neck; square bits of cloth, ornamented with sewing-silk, and trimmed with colored ribbons, and pen-and-ink miniature figures of saints. There were more than one 'Presepio' of large size; a sort of holy peep-show, representing Bethlehem Stable, with wax figures stuck about. There were worsted-worked prodigal sons, with black and white stitches, for eyes; and a speckled wool calf in the distance: embroidered Ruths, with blue and white floss silk eyes, and pink floss cheeks, and yellow floss sheaves of corn framed and glazed. There were certain fabrications, popularly believed to be meant for watch-pockets, (were a watch among the family possessions),—or for reliquaries; these were fashioned of all conceivable varieties; octagonal, hexagonal, square, oval, round, and diamond-shaped; quilted, quilled, frilled, and rosetted; but invariably finished off with such slender hanging-ribbons, that on putting these frail and treacherous pouches to the use for which they were professedly adapted, the watch or relic would disappear behind the bed's head—smash on to the floor. There were shell-work bags that would not bear anything put into them heavier or stronger than flue; feather, and rice, and wafer-baskets, that mightn't be touched, lest they should come ungummed, or unpasted, or unfixed. And then the things, by courtesy, called paintings! Daubs of heads, with mouths out of drawing, chins awry, eyes askew, nostrils formed by a dot or a scratch.

On the eve of the appointed day, the whole was collected, sorted, and disposed to the best advantage, preparatory to the important occasion; and the young ladies were permitted to enjoy the sight of their accumulated labours. While the rest had been eagerly inspecting the arrange-

ments, Katharina had remained in a quiet corner, diligently plying her knitting-needles.

"And is it possible you don't take any interest in the sight of all these beautiful things, sister?" said Bianca. "Do come and look at them, now they are arranged."

"Truly, not I; I don't care for 'em;" returned she.

"An't you pretending? Don't you really care?" said Lisa, one of the youngest of the pupils.

"I never pretend—nothing's worth the trouble of making a pretence about, that I see. I don't mean these things, but things in general; there's nothing worth pretending to feel what one don't feel. I'm a bad hand at pretending; I might get on better if I did, perhaps. But I can't; and moreover, I don't think I wish I could;" said Katharina.

"But don't you admire these beautiful works? I think them lovely! I only wish I could make any one of them—but I'm too young;" sighed Lisa. "Perhaps next half, sister Maria-Josepha says, I may be able to try an iron-holder; but I fear I shall never succeed. O you should see the glass-bead dew-drop on Celestina's plum pincushion! O so natural! And the bloom! Oh dear! If nobody rubs it off by accident, before the time comes—it will be so praised! And oh! you should see the caterpillar Alicia has worked upon hers. It makes my flesh creep, it's so real! And as for the lady-bird, and the beetle, on the leaf, they're perfect little darlings!"

"Carolina Ariotti has painted such a beautiful tear on her Hagar's cheek—it seems to be actually running down her face;" said Bianca.

"From the glance I had, it seemed to be stuck upon her nose;" said, Katharina.

"But you surely admire Anna Berini's group of flowers; and Luisa Romelli's landscape?" said her sister.

"Neither one nor t'other; one's all blue passion-flowers, and pink lilies; and the other's all lilac skies, red trees, and brown water. That's how you always go on, Bianca,—picking out the very worst things, and bepraising them most. It's just as if you praised in spite,—over-praised, to draw more attention to the defects."

"There's some truth in that;" remarked one of the young ladies, aside.

"They say, the Sisters of Humility have such exquisite works this year;" observed another of the scholars. "I suppose they're trying to cut us out, as usual; but I don't think they will."

"It's really very mean of them to be always vieing with us. Sisters of Humility, indeed! That's not much like practising the virtue, methinks!" said a third.

"I hear they're working a splendid altar-cloth, with a lace border that depth," said the other; "and the pattern's to be wheat-ears, vine-leaves, and grapes. But we can match it with our banner for the Easter procession. Why, the gold rays alone, round the Agnus Dei, are worth all they can do in the way of lace-work."

Most of the young ladies here went away, to take another view of the assembled works; little Lisa alone remaining near Katharina.

"Why don't you admire those things?" she said, after a few minutes watching the knitting.

"They seem to me trumpery, tawdry, frippery; not worth the time and trouble that have been wasted on them; certainly not worth the spite, and jealousy, and petty envy that they have created. Did you hear what they said about the works at the rival convent?"

"Yes. It's a pity they do that; but they don't know any better, I suppose. They've never thought of it in that way. They're taught to strive all they can to out-do the Sisters of Humility, and to work as hard as they can to get a prize. I wish I could get a prize! I wonder whether I shall ever work well enough to get one. Why didn't you do some pretty work to get a prize, Katharina? Don't you wish for one?"

"No; I like knitting stockings better than fancy-work; and I don't wish for a prize."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Lisa, with a look of wonder, as if she found it very difficult to believe what she heard.

The grand day arrived. An ecclesiastical dignitary of eminence had promised to honor the proceedings with his presence. He was to be seated on a kind of throne, temporarily erected; hung with garlands of

artificial flowers, and plentifully besprinkled with spangles. In the body of the room were ranged benches, for the accommodation of the parents and guests, who formed an eager and expectant crowd The upper end of the room was fitted up with a kind of dais, or raised platform, on which stood a well-thumped set of virginals, that had seen severe service beneath the fingers of daily relays of practising young ladies; on it also were rows of school-forms; and around hung a great deal of festooned drapery of white and sky-blue calico, intermingled with wreaths of pink paper roses.

The guests, on arriving, were conducted through a suite of rooms, in which were long tables, covered with the school-works, set out with elaborate care, so as to display them to the best advantage, and with slips of written paper pinned on each, bearing the name of the gifted young lady whose work it might be. There was, of course, much lingering, and inspecting, and admiring, on the part of the visitors, as they passed along through these importantly-laden tables; much congratulation, approbation, laudation, from them; much whispering, confidential hinting, and delicately insinuated flattery to certain parental ears, from the nuns,—teachers in the school,—who glided to and fro among the lady-friends of their young charges,—mothers, doting aunts, affectionate cousins, or wondering younger sisters, brought by especial indulgence to this scene of juvenile glory and achievement. Now and then, a side-door would open, and a young lady or two, of the school, would slip in among the arrivals, to give a surreptitious welcome to their own particular party. On the stairs, on the landing, here and there along the antechambers, might be seen some of these adventurous spirits, flitting amidst the crowd of gaily dressed worldlings, conspicuous by their white frocks, blue sashes, and veils, their hushed voices, their pretendedly-apprehensive glances at the nun-teachers (secure, all the while, of their connivance); while squeezes of the hand, furtive kisses, and stolen hugs, were plentifully exchanged between them and their delighted relations.

Suddenly there is a whisper runs among the crowd:—"Monsignore is arrived! Make way! make way!" The crowd draws back—there is a passage formed, through which Monsignore and the troop of attend-

ant priests pass, in great state and dignity, towards the great room. The nuns disperse, the stray school-girls vanish, the crowd close in behind the ecclesiastical train, and hurry forward to secure seats. Monsignore is ushered to the throne; the attendant priests sit around him; the visitors push and struggle for the front benches; the nuns attempt to marshal them into order, and to prevent some of the ladies from occupying three-fourths more space than is necessary, with the skirts of their gowns. By dint of a great deal of coaxing, smiling, whispering, nodding, nudging, and pointing, this is, in some degree, effected; and the majority of the guests are seated. But there are still many standing; some flattened against walls, others jammed in recesses; while through the doorways, there appear vistas of straining heads, which, from their occasional bobbing disappearance, sudden re-appearance, and renewed popping down again, suggest the idea of their owners being on tiptoe as long as nature will second the efforts of their anxiety to behold the exciting scene they imagine to be taking place.

For some time, however, there seems to be nothing of very thrilling interest going forward. There is a pause, during which, Monsignore applies himself to his pouncet-box, and whispers the priest seated next him. Several of the tonsured heads bend forward, and endeavour to partake of the remark that falls from the reverend lips; which, by the smile they wear, proclaim it to be a humorous one. Then the smile is reflected upon each pair of lips belonging to the tonsured heads, obsequious to his reverence's clerical jest. Then there is a troublesome cough affects Monsignore; which the lady Abbess perceiving, she hands him a box of choice sweetmeats. He takes one, with such a look of saintly suavity, that it is positively touching to behold.

Presently, a door in one corner of the platform opens, and the young ladies of the school enter two and two, with their white veils drawn on each side of their faces, their eye-lids cast down, and their hands folded before them. At this point of time, there is a great stir among the straining heads; the tiptoes are perseveringly sustained; and some of the flattened and jammed against the walls and in recesses take the opportunity of stepping on to some of the benches which their former occupants have

in haste abandoned, in order to get a better sight, peering over the heads of those in front. There is much whispering, and pointing out of individuals among the just-entered school-girls, who take their seats upon the very edges of the forms, and remain with their eyes fixed upon the floor, while one of their companions, together with one of the teacher-nuns, goes over towards the virginals, which they proceed to belabour with certain blows supposed to form a musical duet. As this progresses, the veiled young ladies venture to raise their eyes, cast sidelong glances into the room; and as they gradually discover their friends, bite their lips to prevent smiling, then risk another glance, then smile more openly, then nod, and at last, not only interchange looks of recognition with those they know, but actually take courage to stare at Monsignore himself.

The duet ended,—prolonged applause from the guests (of admiration from those connected with the young lady player, of relief from all unconcerned in her) marking its conclusion.—six other young ladies rise from their seats, advance to the front of the platform, andsing a piece of music, in a tone both squeaky and nasal; at certain intervals, elevating their eyes, and lifting their hands—alternately the right and left—in a style imagined to be indicative of feeling, animation, and appropriate action.

At the end of the vocal piece, Monsignore is again seized with a fit of coughing. The box of comfits is once more offered; but this time, the Abbess's courtesy is declined by a gesture of the white and jewelled hand of the polite ecclesiastic; who has an eye to the coming collation, and thinks it as well not to injure his appetite with the cloy of sweets.

Then four young ladies stood up in a row, and engaged in a French recittaion. It consisted of long speeches gabbled by the several young ladies in succession, as rapidly as their organs of articulation would permit; and as, now and then, a hand was raised, a head was nodded, a chin was tossed, and a body was jerked forward with a little petulant motion from the waist, it was presumable that the dialogue was to be understood as consisting of some very smart, witty, and jocose hits. From the circumstance, too, of Monsignore being observed to condescend a gentle smile, which was instantly followed by a corresponding one upon the

faces of the attendant priests; and from the obliging titter which ran through the two front rows, those occupying them being sufficiently near to distinguish (not the sense or meaning, for there was little or none of either—but) the words of the gabbled recitation, there could be no doubt that it was intended to be comic, and highly facetious,—so accordingly, the audience were kind enough to laugh.

Then came the bestowal of the prizes. The candidates—those happy selected young ladies destined to receive them, came one by one, and stood before the throne of Monsignore, who addressed a short speech, in a mild snuffle of mingled admonition and encouragement to each; a tinsel crown was placed on her head, the prize was given into her hands, as loud a congratulatory crash as could be banged out of the old virginals, followed; and then she was permitted to join her friends in the room.

A cold collation succeeded; fruit, cakes, and wine, for the visitors. A banquet of all that could be collected of rarest and most exquisite in both eating and drinking, for Monsignore and his train.

"Do you see who is one of the priests in attendance on his reverence, sister?" whispered Bianca, as the ecclesiastical train left the room where the prizes had been given, for the one in which their refection was spread.

"Yes, yes; I see. It's father Bonifaccio;" was Katharina's reply.

"Oughtn't we to go and speak to him, think you, sister?" continued Bianca.

"You can go, if you think fit; I shan't. I never could endure that filthy old creature, with his carnying way of speaking. I don't know which I used to hate worst—his stinking baize gown, or his smeary voice."

"Fie, sister; you should try and forget his personal defects in his holy office;" said Bianca, with a little prim air peculiar to her.

"Pooh! His defects and my disgust are too strong to be stifled and out-perfumed, even by church-incense. There's one thought, indeed, which might make me tolerate him; but——"

"Tolerate him, sister! Is that the way to speak of a member of holy church?"

"It's my way of speaking, you hear, my demure sister;" said Katharina; "and that's enough for me; and it must be enough for you, too. I never stay to pick my words for any one."

"Pity but you did, perhaps;" said Bianca. "But what was the one thought which might bring you to endure—no, to tolerate the good father? Tolerate, forsooth!"

"Ay, tolerate; that was the word I used. And truly, it demands obtuser senses than I can boast, to let him get the wind of me, for more than the space of ten seconds or so; a minute would upset me quite. I might be subverted,—never converted."

"But your one thought, sister!" pursued Bianca.

"My one thought? Oh, it's gone—it's over—it's past; like most of my good thoughts, it's evanescent—off like the wind. No thought serves to restrain me for a longer time than the summer air takes in blowing the shadow of a cloud across a corn-field; the impression it produces is as fleeting—as transient—as insubstantial."

She fell into a fit of musing; in which Bianca left her, to go and join her schoolfellows. Katharina remained alone; her eye unconsciously watching the dancing of the reflected light from some water in a cut-glass goblet, that had been left untasted by Monsignore, when it was brought him to still his cough. The sunbeams caught the crystal of the glass and water; and threw flickering lights upon the floor at Katharina's foot. Her eye followed their undulations, but she was not noting them. Her brow was knit; her nether lip was drawn in, and held by her front teeth, which pressed upon it; while her thoughts flew back to the time of her mother's death, of her remorse, of her aunt's words which had foretold both, while they had opened her mind to its first perception of a higher rule of action than self-will.

"Had she been here to-day, she would have given me a motive for bearing with him; even for being glad to see him; she would have bade me try and look upon him with toleration, for the sake of one who regarded him;" something like this, was her course of thought; "she would have led me to associate this idea with him, until it overpowered the old disgust, or at any rate taught me the endeavour to lessen my

repugnance, as a deed of expiation towards her memory, whom I have so often fretted and angered on this very man's account. But all this is very fanciful. Why should I trouble my head with it? After all, he is a nasty filthy old man; and my going and speaking to him, won't retrieve my offence to my dead mother. What have I been dreaming of?"

Childish dreams of good and noble things!—unripe perceptions of wiser and more generous impulses!—imperfect visions of the better nature stirring within!—why are ye not more frequently, and more sedulously, watched for, fostered, and developed, by those who have the tutelage of youth? Why was there no gentle friend at hand, with the sense and patience of the good aunt, to bring forth and assist these faint struggles towards good, in Katharina's soul? Is it because girls' schooling is mostly held to be comprised in the teaching of knick-knack making, accomplishments, and housewifery, with but little regard to the heart and mind which may one day be a wife's—perhaps a mother's? Was it that these nuns—like many other school-teachers, were too intent on the culture of external qualifications, to pay any attention to the inward workings of their pupils' natures? Certainly, those of Katharina's were unnoted and unaided; and, left to themselves, they were insufficient to effect the redemption of her character.

Several successive vacations—with their prize-distributions, their work-displays, their pincushions, their recitation-gabbles, their chorus-squeaks, their tinsel-crowns, their paper rose-wreaths, their frivolous anxieties, their important trifles, their absorbing insipidities,—had followed each other as the years came round. But the end of that time found the young ladies of the school little changed. They had grown up, indeed, from quite little chi'dren into tall girls of from fifteen, to seventeen, or eighteen,—some even older—quite young women, in age and appearance: but, in point of mind—in all matters of faculty, or judgment; in heart,—in all matters of principle or sentiment; they were as completely children as ever.

Their brains had remained stunted, while their bodies grew; their characters had been permitted to remain undeveloped; their ideas had

been cramped and compressed into shell-baskets and rice-paper boxes; their thoughts had been pinned down to pincushions: their intellects had been put under glass cases with artificial flowers,—dwarfed and confined beneath glass lids with waxen effigies, and gilt fillagree; they had never been suffered to entertain an opinion on a subject less flimsy than floss silk, catgut, or gauze; to speculate upon higher subjects than paste, wire, and gum; or to exercise their invention upon things of graver weight than feathers,—of greater moment than spangles, foil, and tinsel.

In all, save increased dexterity of finger, they were veriest babies still. Some of the most energetic among them, who had been prompted by natural activity to take advantage of the lessons going on at those times when the preparation for the prizes did not engross all attention, had gained a smattering of grammar, a notion or two of geography, (about as much, perhaps, as to know that their native Italy was pink, had shaped like a boot; that France was blue, Portugal green, Spain yellow, and the British Islands a smoky brown), could write flourished alphabets in three or four different texts, and add up sums the whole length of a slate:—but these were looked upon as the prodigies of the school—quite geniuses; girls almost unfemininely clever.

The same rivalry went on between the two convents year after year. The school conducted by the Ladies of the Holy Petticoat, maintained its preem'nence as a fashionable seminary; while that under the superintendence of the Sisters of Humility was still cited for its strict discipline, its propriety, and its excellent system. Many particulars of this system became known to the rival school, by the secession of one of the young lady boarders, who coaxed her guardian into letting her come over to the milder and more modish establishment. She was received with delight by her new schoolfellows. Her acquisition was a matter of triumph. Her stories of the community she had left, were devoured with avidity. She was urged, encouraged, courted, to relate every petty minutia concerning it. They dwelt, with the pertinacious interest of little minds, upon the most insignificant details; and seemed never weary of hearing and canvassing the most trivial circumstances. The

appetite for gossip, induced by paucity of food of a higher kind, is as craving as it is irrational. It increases in proportion as it is gratified. It seems absolutely insatiate. No amount of gossip suffices your gossip-lover. No amount of the aliment—frothy in itself, to be sure.—will produce repletion. A true gossip-lover will gorge it with hungry eagerness—with an ever-gaping maw, that only such fictitious appetites know. The appetite for gossip is a morbid taste, one of those unwholesome, unnatural relishes,—such as they fancy for crunching slate-pencil, green gooseberries, cabbage-stump, and raw turnips,—very apt to grow upon ill-regulated school-girls; and it is almost sure to be engendered by frivolous instruction, a teaching of handiworks rather than of ideas,—insufficient mental culture. Give a girl silly things to do and to think of.—occupy her fingers, and leave her mind unsupplied,—and the natural consequence is, inanity, with its almost universal concomitant, an inordinate love of gossip.

To see the way in which her schoolfellows flocked round their new associate, Elvira Blangini, at recreation time; every voice full of eager enquiry, every eye fixed upon her, their looks beaming with interest, their lips apart and breathless, their chattering hushed while she spoke, it might have been supposed that some object of vital importance was in operation, profoundly affecting them all. But no; they had only been questioning her about the regulations observed at meal-times, at bed-time, and during play hours, in the school of the holy Sisterhood of Humility.

"At five? O, impossible!" exclaimed half a score of voices.

"Hush! let's hear!" screamed a score and a half. "Let her speak! Tell us, Elvira! tell us!"

"Quite true, I assure you!" replied she. "Five, winter and summer. And expected to be down in the school-room at half-past; washed and dressed, too, I can tell you; or there was a sum that height, to add up, for our pains."

"Shameful!" ejaculated the half score. "We never have to get up here, till seven; and early enough too, I'm sure!"

"Hush!" screamed the rest. "But how about dinner, Elvira? Were you allowed to send up your plates twice?"

"O yes, as often as we liked, but it was such nasty mess; that eternal 'polenta;' plain soup and 'bollito,' or simple 'arrosto;' no nice dishes,—nothing savory,—nothing dainty in the way of sweets:—all so disgustingly insipid—and stupidly wholesome. Pah! It makes me sick to think of it!"

"Pah! Ugh!" echoed her new schoolfellows. "No wonder you wished to leave, and come to us. We have such nice things—all the new-invented dishes, and most delicious sauces; and such puddings!"

"It's a pity we're only helped once, though; I could often eat more;" murmured the voice of a little girl; but it was drowned in the farther enquiries of the crowd.

"Nothing but water? Oh dear!"

"No, nothing but water; reverend mother used to say it would make us fair; and that she didn't mind about our drinking, so that we did but eat well. She said, eating heartily was the best thing growing girls could do; and used to beg the teachers to see that we had sufficient; but, you know, it was impossible to eat enough to satisfy oneself, of their nauseous 'bollito' and 'arrosto.' I'm sure I couldn't."

"How did you manage?" said the little girl who had before spoken. "You must have starved; only you don't look very thin."

Perhaps Elvira didn't hear her; at any rate she didn't answer her; but went on to say:—"You can't think what a pack of absurd rules they had there. One was, that if any young lady talked at meal-time she was to give a fine to the poor-box; if she was inattentive, or saucy, or disobedient, always a fine, and always put into that never-ending poor-box. Then there was another; if you left off any portion of dress that was too old, or that you had out-grown, it was added to the bundle always accumulating for the out-of-work among the poor; then they made us scrape lint for the poor, and make baby-linen for the poor,—at least, they called it *allowing* us to work for them—as if it were any such vast privilege to bore oneself with taking trouble for a tribe of people whom one never saw."

"O, but for the poor, you know!" exclaimed Bianca, and one or two others.

"Yes, yes, it's all very well; I don't mind helping the poor, of course; giving them money, doing charity, and all that; but I have no notion of giving oneself trouble for 'em, you know;" said Elvira. "That's rather too much of a good thing."

Katharina gave a short laugh. "Too much for you,—or for them?" she said.

Elvira only stared in reply, and went on:—"Then they were so tiresomely moral, and strict, and straight-laced; appealing to our own feeling, and duty, and that kind of thing. We were all to be upon honour, as they styled it, with regard to our faults; and to tell of ourselves, if we were conscious of having done wrong, or deserved punishment. A likely thing, indeed! They talked about reasoning with us, and trying to convince our good sense—and a parcel of ridiculous stuff of that sort! Perfect nonsense, you know!"

"La, yes! All we have to do here, is just to obey; that's all. They settle for us what's right, and what's wrong; we have only to believe what we're told, and to do as we're bid. And really, it saves trouble;" said one of her hearers.

"Then they were so frumpish and fogeyish in their ways!" continued Elvira. "Because they're called Sisters of Humility, I suppose, they won't allow a bit of ornament any where about the rooms; the walls are white-washed, the floors are all plain brick,—no ornament,—no 'battuto.' There's an iron grating in the receiving-parlour; but not a picture, not a flower, not a morsel of drapery. There's not even a bell in the house; but when a summons is needed, it is given by striking a couple of iron rods, or small bars, together; and this, it seems, is merely because it has been an old custom, from time immemorial, and therefore thought to be more primitive, and less pretentious. The Sisters of Humility are very proud of their primitive simplicity; and affect, in all things, merest neatness and utility. They plume themselves on their meekness, and hold their heads high on the strength of their lowliness and purity."

"Is back-biting one of their purities?" said Katharina; "do they inculcate spite and slander among their meek precepts?"

"What does she mean?" said Elvira, with a slight shrug, and a look of enquiry at her companions.

"O, we none of us ever mind Katharina; she's allowed to be as cross as ever she likes—it's her way—she can't help it, poor thing!" tittered Carolina, one of the school-girls.

"Gramercy for your forbearance;" said Katharina; "only, as you give me credit for none, don't be surprised if I pay you out, the next such sneer you treat me to. Remember; I warn you!"

"Fie, sister!" said Bianca, interposing; "Carolina meant no harm, I dare say; you only prove her words, in being so cross with her. Why do you lose your temper?"

"Quite right, my smooth sister!" said Katharina; "Carolina meant no more harm than you do, I'll be bound. You two, deal in the proprieties and safeties of inuendo, and affected pity; while I prefer outspeaking. As to losing my temper, I can't well lose what I never had."

"What a queer girl your sister seems!" said Elvira to Bianca, as Katharina left the room "How tartly and snappishly she takes one up at every word! She seems a regular spitfire!"

"I mustn't listen to my sister's dispraise, or allow you to call her names, to my face;" said Bianca, in her prim way. "But I will own to you in confidence,—for I've quite taken a fancy to you, Elvira dear,—quite should like you for a friend,—and we can't help liking friends for companions even better than sisters, you know, sometimes—I will own to you that she has an unhappy temper, and that she's been more than once called what you called her just now."

"Spitfire?" said Elvira.

Bianca nodded. "Yes; shocking, isn't it? And worse than that!"

"La, what?" said Elvira.

"Shrew;" said Bianca with an emphatic pause. "Dreadful, isn't it? Really dreadful, you know, for a girl to have a sister known as a shrew and a spitfire; and to be called so, too; and not able to contradict them, when they call her so; for certainly, it must be owned, she is a shrew and a spitfire both. Oh, if you did but know——"

"What, what? Speak out, Bianca;" said Elvira, and two or three of the other girls.

"But perhaps I oughtn't to speak of it, as it was my own sister who did it;" said Bianca.

"Did what? Do speak out—do tell us."

"Really, it was too horrible—he might have died—if you had but seen the wound on his temple—and oh! the blood! Oh!"

"Good gracious, Bianca! wound!—blood! Goodness me, did she ever murder any one?" And the girls drew round Bianca eagerly; and never ceased plying her with questions till they had drawn from her the story of the boy and girl squabble between Giulio and Katharina; of the stone thrown into the tree; of his falling to the ground wounded and insensible. "But of course she didn't mean it, you know;" concluded Bianca; "you mustn't think more hardly of my sister, than you can possibly help. She has an unfortunate temper—that's all."

"Ah, but who can like a girl with such a temper as her's, I should be glad to know?" said Elvira. "It's impossible to like a girl who could behave in such a way as that!"

"I oughtn't perhaps to have told about it;" said Bianca.

"Then why did you?" said one of the girls.

"I am sure I would not set you against my sister, on any account;" said Bianca. "I should be very sorry to do that; but every one can see that she's ungovernable, hasty, and apt to be passionate and wilful."

"To be sure; every body can see that! A disagreeable, cross, overbearing spitfire! that's what she is! I shall take very good care *she* shall never be my friend. Very different from her sister, my sweet darling Bianca;" said Elvira.

"Still I shouldn't have mentioned about Giulio if I'd thought you'd have thought the worse of Kate for it; with all her faults, she's my sister, you know;" said Bianca.

"Did you think we should think the better of her for it?" said the same girl who had before spoken; and who, having formerly been a great friend and favorite of Bianca's, felt jealous of the liking which had evi-

dently sprung up between her and the new-comer, Elvira; and seemed bent on revenging herself, by asking teasing questions.

"Never mind, Bianca; you had a right to tell what you did;" said Elvira. "An't I your friend? And we ought to have no concealments from our friends, you know."

"Very true; and you're my dearest friend;" said Bianca; "my bosom-friend. I liked you from the very first; and I feel now, I shall always like you."

"I wonder how long the 'always' will last;" said the other girl, laughing contemptuously, as she turned away, and left them together.

"I hope all our life;" said Elvira. "I've taken quite as strong a fancy to you, Bianca darling, as you have to me;" she continued; "and when the holidays come, you must spend them with me. I shall write and ask your father to spare you to me; and I shall tell him he mustn't think of refusing me, for I'm accustomed to have my own way in everything. My old guardian lets me do just as I like; excepting that he would have me go to school at last, because he said it was only what every young lady did,—and certainly it would be awkward not to know anything at all; of course, that would be tiresome—more tiresome, even, than going to school,—so I went."

"To the convent of the Sisters of Humility?" said Bianca.

"Yes; one of the nuns is a relation of my guardian's; and she persuaded him to send me there. She talked him into a notion that I had been spoiled,—let to run wild; that my education had been neglected,—ruined; therefore he consented that I should try what a finishing-school would do for me. But I was hipped and moped to death with those old frumps; so after trying it a little time, I got guardy to change my school,—and here I am; and I'm sure I shall like this one,—at least, as well as any school."

"Don't you like school?" said Bianca.

"Like school!" exclaimed Elvira; "why, of course not; who does? stupid teaching, and humdrum learning, and dull lessons, and all that,—instead of doing as one likes all day, and idling away as much time as one pleases, sauntering in the garden, and so forth, as one can do at

home. Besides, Hortensio says I'm too old for school now; and so I am. I shall be nineteen next birth-day."

"I didn't know you had a brother;" said Bianca.

"I haven't;" said Elvira.

"Then who's Hortensio? I thought, perhaps, he was your brother."

"My brother? La, no! He's—he's—a—a—friend; a neighbour of ours. His father's house is next door to us; and the garden joins ours. When I'm at home, he comes sometimes, and sits with me, in the summer-house; that is, if I give him leave; for he never ventures to climb over the wall without my permission."

"Climb over the wall!" said Bianca.

"Yes; there's a wall between the two gardens;" said Elvira; "so he's obliged to climb it, when he comes to have a chat with me."

"He could go round through the house, couldn't he?" asked Bianca.

"O dear, no! Guardy don't know that I know him. That is, he don't know that we know each other more than as mere neighbours, and all that. Guardy and Hortensio's father are not on speaking terms; so he don't think we're a bit more intimate than they are, don't you see?"

"I see;" said Bianca.

"And I hope you'll see Hortensio himself, next holidays;" said Elvira. He is so handsome, you've no idea! Such black eyes and hair! Such loves of white teeth, and such a darling aquiline nose! He is the very handsomest boy I ever saw! I know you'll admire him."

"I'm sure I shall, if you do, my dear friend;" said Bianca.

"I wish the holidays were come; I quite long to show him to you!" said Elvira. "What an endless time it does seem to wait."

In spite of the endless-seeming time, it came to an end at last; and Elvira Blangini obtained her wish of having her friend Bianca Minola to spend the holidays with her. She also very soon had her other wish fulfilled, of showing Hortensio. For not long after the two girls had arrived, and were still in all the delight of unpacking their school-boxes, and arranging their dresses and the rest of the school-girl possessions coming under the comprehensive term,—"things," in their own

rooms, when suddenly Elvira exclaimed in a sort of breathless excitement —"Come here, come here, Bianca, to this window! stand behind this curtain with me, and peep out, and you'll see him. There! Look! Walking in the next garden, with a mandolin in his hand. It's he, himself!"

"Who?" said Bianca.

"Who, child? Why, Hortensio, to be sure! Dear fellow, there he is! He little thinks who's looking at him."

"That! That, Hortensio! Why, that's a man!" exclaimed Bianca.

"A man? Why, of course! La, child, what do you suppose he was?"

"A boy; you always spoke of Hortensio as a boy; and I was foolish enough to expect to see a little fellow with curly black hair, and rosy cheeks; and now I see a tall young man,—quite a tall young man;" said Bianca.

"Ah, I see how it is;" said Elvira laughing. "Yes, yes, he was quite a boy when I first knew him; and I've known him so long, and seen him so frequently, and so intimately, and easily, and all that, you know, sitting and chatting with him like neighbours' children, together, in the summer-house, down yonder, that I've always kept on thinking of him as a boy; and have talked of him to you as a boy; I suppose."

"Yes, you certainly did;" said Bianca. "You gave me the idea of quite a boy, by your manner of speaking; for you said he was a handsome boy, you know—and yet,—yet,—he actually has—actually—a moustache! and—and—a—a—tuft!"

"Well, I suppose that don't hinder him from being handsome, does it?" said Elvira, still laughing. "For my part, I think they make him look handsomer than ever. I'm glad he wears his moustache; and don't shave it off, as some of the effeminate young fellows nowadays have taken to do. But come, Bianca, get a fan—I have mine—and we'll go down into the garden and see him. He'll be so astonished to find I'm come home. Why, how you blush! What a bashful thing you are!"

"Am I?" said Bianca.

"Are you? why, to be sure you are! A regular schoolgirl,—out of countenance at everything Didn't you color up to the eyes, when I

first presented you to my old guardian, this morning? As if he could be anything to blush at. The idea of blushing about guardy! Why one would as soon think of changing color for the bronze statue of holy St. Anthony!"

"If I blushed at all, it was from surprise, I believe;" said Bianca. "I was astonished to see your guardian looking so young; I had imagined him, from your words, to be an old gentleman."

"Why so he is! He's fifty at least—quite an old fogey; I shouldn't wonder, if he were fifty-two or three."

"I somehow absurdly fancied he was about eighty. I expected to see a tottering old gentleman, with a crutched stick; and he's a smart beau—quite gallant, and attentive; and I thought seemed particularly so, to his fair ward; eh, Elvira?"

"O, if you mean he admires me—you're quite right there;" said Elvira, whose cheeks certainly evinced not the slightest tendency to change color, and bore full testimony to the truth of her thinking it wonderful that guardy should be a subject for blushing; "the old fellow hasn't lost the use of his eyes; he can see a pretty girl clear enough—and knows that I'm one—and would only be too glad to marry me to-morrow, if I'd have him."

"How you talk, Elvira!" said Bianca.

"Ay, my dear; I'm out of bounds, now: I can be as prim as you please—as demure-looking and as demure spoken as yourself, when I'm in school. But school's one thing, and home's another; and that's why I like home best—as I've often told you. But, come; don't let's stand chattering and dawdling here any longer; let's go down into the garden."

When they reached the summer-house, Elvira gave Bianca a bit of fancy-work, to hold in her hands, and took up some herself; but presently flung it down, and took up a book, turning over the leaves, and reading a line or two aloud, here and there; stopping, and listening occasionally, between whiles; then with an air of vexation, tossed that aside also, and snatched up a guitar, struck a few chords, going close to the open window as she did so.

Presently a voice was heard, at a little distance, saying:—I did not know you were returned home, signorina; may I come over?"

Elvira stepped to the entrance, smiling, and graciously bowing her head; and, in another instant, Hortensio leaped the low wall, and came forward to the summer-house.

Elvira Blangini presented him to her young school-friend, on seeing whom, the young man, at first, looked much embarrassed; but what with the absence of all embarrassment on the part of the young hostess herself, who seemed in the height of good-humour and spirits, and what with the extreme shyness of her friend Bianca, he soon gained courage: grew talkative and gay—rattled on—rallied the young ladies on their notable dispositions—gave his opinion on silks—shades of colour, &c. &c.; and in short, made himself quite agreeable, and at home with them.—ending by offering to play either the guitar or the mandolin to them as they worked.

"No, perhaps best not;" said Elvira, giving a peculiar look in the direction of the house; "you may read to us, if you like—here's Ariosto."

"La, do you read poetry, Elvira?" said Bianca; "I thought it was forbidden."

"Oh, ay, at the convent, child; it's all very well there; but here, I read what I like. We're school-girls there; we're women here, my dear;" said Elvira.

"And very charming women, too;" replied Hortensio, with a gallant bow and glance. The words, the bow, and the glance, caused her such a hot rush of confusion, as Bianca had never before experienced. She knew not which way to look; while her friend exclaimed,—"What a shamefaced moppet thou art, Bianca! Shut up in that dowdy old convent, thou hast heard nought but chidings, from teachers and nuns. But in the world, child, thou'lt hear quite other phrases; commendation, not chiding, is the mode here abroad."

"And the signorina Bianca must learn to bear hearing her own praises; she'll hear little else, I fancy, when once she has exchanged the convent for the world;" said Hortensio, with another bow, and another glance.

Whether because the words, the bow, and the glance, were now addressed solely to Bianca, without including herself, certain it is, that there was something in them which made Elvira rejoin—"Yes, my dear, you must learn to listen to praise in the world, without letting it turn your little head! You'll give up blushing at fine speeches, when you discover that they mean just nothing at all. You'll soon care no more for the praises, than we used to do for the chidings; and that was little enough, I believe! But hush!—what was that?—I thought I heard ——"

She put her finger on her lip—listened—then pointed stealthily in the direction whence Hortensio had come. The gesture was so significant, and so instantaneously obeyed by the young gentleman's sudden retirement over the wall, that Bianca could not help seeing it must have been a signal in frequent use between them on former occasions of the like kind.

The next moment Elvira's guardian appeared in one of the garden-walks, approaching them; and Bianca, if she had had courage to look up, might have perceived still farther and edifying proof, in the unmoved colour and expression of her friend's face, that she had said truly, she thought blushing for guardy a preposterous idea. Not even the gross deception she was playing off upon him, could excite one faintest reddening. On the contrary; with hard glassy eye, and hard brassy voice, set in the detestable firmness of triumphant, as well as habitual deceit, she said; "I'm glad you're come, guardy; I want to consult you about the dance you have promised me to give my schoolfellows. When shall it be?"

"Whenever it best pleases yourself to appoint, my charming Elvira;" said the gallant guardian, raising his ward's hand to his lips; "only whenever the time fixed, remember that I claim this fair hand for the first dance."

"We'll see about that, guardy;" said Elvira, half coldly, half coquettishly withdrawing her hand, and giving him a pat on the back of his; "you know I don't approve of such ways!"

"I know you are all discretion and propriety, my sweet Elvira;"

said he, with a fond look, so different from the fatherly one it ought to have been, from a guardian to his ward, that Bianca could not help thinking he really did look, after all, very old and horrible.

"Bianca darling, you take this sheet of paper, and write down the names of the guests we mean to invite, while guardy and I dictate them to you. Guardy shall tell you the young men, and I—no, stay,—I'll select the young men, and guardy shall name the young ladies we'll have. Of course we must ask your sister Katharina, Bianca dearest; or she'll feel herself affronted, and I should be sorry to do that for your sake; otherwise I'd rather be without her? What say you?"

"O, she'd be highly affronted, if she were left out;" said Bianca "she'd fret and fume for a week, and lead my father such a life! For his sake, we must have her."

"If we must, we must;" said Elvira. "And now, guardy, for the rest of the young ladies."

While she bribed his attention and good-humour by letting him name all the prettiest girls of their acquaintance, she made out her own list of sparks; artfully contriving to insert Hortensio's name, with a passing remark, uttered in a negligent off hand way, to the effect that they could not well omit asking so near a neighbour, as they wanted all the eligible young men they could muster, to make up the requisite number of partners.

An early day was fixed; the interval being devoted by Elvira and Bianca to consultation upon the dresses they should wear, and to consideration and discussion of the mode in which they might altogether most becomingly set themselves off for the occasion.

"Not that I care for dress, you know, my dear Elvira;" said Bianca. "It is even sinful vanity, and waste of time, to bestow much time on adorning one's person; a simple white frock and a few flowers in her hair and bosom are the utmost ornaments a young girl needs; but I would fain put them on as advantageously as might be, that I may do honor to my friend's ball."

Elvira laughed. "Vastly well, my little sanctimony! That speech of thine would do mighty well for the convent; and befits thee, who has

just come thence. But I doubt me, Bianca darling, whether thou be'st not in good sooth, as arrant a little sly-boots, as the worst of us wicked worldlings."

"Nay. Elvira; I know not what thou mean'st. Sly-boots! I?"

"Thou'rt right, sweetest! That little innocent air of thine will do wonders with the men, by and bye. It'll tell, amazingly. They'll think thee a miracle of artlessness, meekness, and all-charming modesty."

"What wild thoughts thou hast, Elvira! I care not for attracting men's commendations, not I. How can'st thou think such wicked things?"

"I think them, because I know them. I know, that however we may see fit to make a pretence of bashfulness and pretty confusion, at the bare idea of a man's admiring us, it's the idea that creeps nearest the heart of all us school-girls from the very first moment we make out what's in a mirror. And depend on't, between ourselves, it's just such quiet girls as you and I, who know how to carry it demurely before nuns and teachers in the convent, and before duennas and guardians in the world, who most think of our looks, and of the impression they'll make. An out-speaker, a reckless doer, like your sister Katharina, now, though she seem to court attention by her violence of manner; cares, in reality, little to attract, far less to secure admiration."

"She wouldn't be so negligent of appearances, certainly, if she cared to win liking;" mused Bianca.

"Exactly, my dear; you can see clearly what I mean, I perceive;" said Elvira. "Best be candid between ourselves, whatever we may be to others."

"Owning a thing to an intimate,—to a bosom-friend, is of course very different from showing our secret feelings to all the world;" said Bianca.

"Precisely, darling; so now let's determine what flowers we'll wear. I think I shall have oleanders; and you shall have a wreath of pomegranate-blossoms."

"A simple lily will do for me;" said Bianca.

"Well done, simplicity!" laughed Elvira. "Your meekness knows

full well, that a single white flower will set off your golden curls better than a whole garland of scarlet showiness; eh, Bianca?"

"Red never did suit me;" said Bianca. "It's too staring—too gaudy—I don't like to draw notice upon me, by wearing such very bright-coloured flowers."

"Stick to the truth, my dear; it popped out at first. Red don't become you!" answered her friend.

"How can you, my dearest Elvira? But come, let us plan how you shall wear your oleanders. Shall they be placed on one side, in a drooping bunch? Or twisted into a chaplet round the head?"

The party assembled at the ball was a very large one. There were all Elvira and Bianca's favorite schoolfellows, as well as a goodly company of young people of both sexes,—neighbours and acquaintances; besides whom, were some elderly members of the same families. Among the latter, was a madame Ciarla,—known to all Padua as an inveterate gossip, though a good-natured woman.

On her first arrival, she found herself near Bianca, who had just advanced to receive her sister Katharina, and dutifully to ask news of her father.

"Well, young ladies, I'm delighted to see you once again; and so grown and improved, I declare! All Padua misses two such ornaments to its society as the signorini Minola, I can tell you."

"Why should you flatter us?" said Katharina.

"Flattery? Not a bit of it! You are both very handsome girls; and as you'll soon be told so by all the young gallants, it's as well the news should be broke to you first by an old woman like me. And it's no such unwelcome news, either. To be told that you have hair as black and as glossy as a raven's wing; and that your eyes sparkle like diamonds, is no such hardship to hear, surely. And there's your sister, miss Bianca, quite a different style of beauty, to be sure; but still, with her gold locks and blue eyes, and pink cheeks,—and then with that modest glance—and that white frock, and pure lily—she looks so nice and so pretty, one could eat her."

"A dainty compliment!" said Katharina, with her short laugh.

"If you think me pretty—I mean good looking—that is, not ugly," said Bianca. "what will you say, when you see my friend, Elvira Blangini? She is indeed a lovely girl—a perfect beauty, isn't she, Kate?"

"Far from it,—and you know it, Bianca; but that's just your way;" said Katharina. "Your praise, when you give it, is such over-praise, that it seems like malice. When you tell people that Elvira Blangini is lovely—a perfect beauty—it's more likely to do your friend harm than good: for their feeling, when they see her, will be disappointment; and they'll be inclined to find her even less pretty than they would have done without your insidious praise."

"I didn't see you at church last Sunday, miss Katharina;" said madame Ciarla, anxious to effect a change in the conversation.

"I never go to church, if I can help it;" said Katharina. "It makes me feel so irreligious."

"Fie, sister!" said Bianca; "what a strange girl you are!"

"Irreligious?—going to church make you irreligious? My dear young lady, what can you mean?" said madame Ciarla.

"I mean that when I'm there, I see so much staring about them, so much irreverence, so much attention to everything but what they ought to be attending to, on the part of the congregation; I hear such odd things said, I see such strange things done, that it puts me into a fever of anger, and of inclination to scoff, and doubt, and question; makes me so undevout, so irreligious, so impious, that I avoid going to church on principle. I don't want to make myself worse than I am; so I stay away."

"I don't understand you, my dear; said the old lady. Then, after looking for a moment more, in a wondering, puzzled way, at Katharina, who offered no farther explanation, madame Ciarla continued:—"I was quite disappointed not to see you there, with your father, good signior Minola; and so were others, I fancy, who had heard wonders of the growth, and improvement in beauty, of his two fair daughters, since they've been so long away at school. There was signior Gremio, who had lost his old father, by-the-by, at last, and is, I hear, on the look-out

for a pretty young wife, to help him spend his large inheritance. And then there was young signior Giulio, who's grown quite a tall handsome young man; he shows no signs of the weakness and deformity that were predicted he would grow up with, if ever he reached to man's estate, in consequence of that terrible fall he had, when a boy. But, bless me, I beg your pardon, miss Katharina; I forgot all about it's having been you who caused that accident. Your turning so red, reminded me; but he bears no malice about it—he never speaks of the matter, and seems to have forgotten that such a thing ever took place at all."

"He was an ill-bred, teasing brat, and deserved all he got;" said Katharina. "That's all I remember of him. I've forgotten him, quite as much as he has me."

"I dare say he hasn't forgotten you, my dear miss Katharina;" said the old lady; "indeed, I know he hasn't, for the other day. I heard him say——"

"Best not speak of him; my sister dislikes him; it only irritates her to mention his name;" said Bianca.

Her sister gave her a strange look, and seemed about to speak; but she checked herself, bit her lips, and forced herself to listen to what madame Ciarla was going on to say.

"Well, we'll speak of a gayer subject. It seems that signior Gremio is determined to celebrate his coming into his fortune, with a grand party,—quite a festival."

"He's of age, certainly; though a good deal more than twenty-one;" sneered Katharina.

"He is old, it must be owned;" said madame Ciarla; "nearer sixty than fifty, I take it; but, as he's only just come into his birth-right, and on the look-out for a young bride to share it with him, I dare say, there won't lack for pretty girls, at this grand party of his."

"Very likely;" said Katharina.

"I suppose we shan't see you there, miss Minola;" said madame Ciarla; "for young signior Giulio will certainly be asked; and as you've such a pique against him still, perhaps you won't like to meet him."

"I shan't stay away on his account, depend upon it; I care too little

about him, to let his presence prevent me from going wherever I like;" said Katharina, with the same sudden color in her cheeks, as had flashed into them, on the first mention of his name. As she turned away, Bianca said to the old lady, "What a pity it is, my sister retains her animosities so bitterly, and so long. She never can bear that young man's name repeated,—though so many years have elapsed since their boy and girl quarrel,—without turning scarlet. I've remarked it frequently, whenever I've happened to revert to the subject; which I have done sometimes,—quite inadvertently, of course."

At this moment, Hortensio made his way up to Bianca, saying:—"There is such a crowd. I have only just been able to reach you, signorina. Pity my Tantalus torture; I have been watching you from a distance without being able to get near enough to beseech your hand for the dance."

"Where is Elvira—will not she expect—where is Elvira?" said Bianca, looking down, and picking the tip of her glove.

"She is dancing this measure with her guardian; let us find places anywhere; the dancers are so numerous, we cannot be fastidious; nor shall I feel inclined to be so, were it the worst place in the room, with my present partner,—except, perhaps, for her sake."

"Who is she?" said Bianca, looking up with an air of unconsciousness worthy of one who had left school many years, instead of a few days.

"The charming Bianca; when she deigns to accord me this fair hand." He seized it, and hurried her among the dancers.

"Look at my friend Elvira, yonder; how exquisitively beautiful she looks, does she not, in the full bloom and animation of the dance?" said Bianca to Hortensio.

"It strikes me she looks a little sulky, at this moment;" he replied laughingly.

"Ah! can you wonder, with that ugly old man for her partner?" said Bianca, casting a moment's glance at her own young dashing one, then casting her eyes down upon her spread fan.

"He's an odious wretch certainly, to aspire to youth and beauty for a wife, which I fancy he does;" said Hortensio.

"Yet he's almost warranted, by the great temptation. Is she not passing lovely? Did you ever see more brilliant carnation on a cheek? Or hair more flowing, in its graceful disorder?" persisted Bianca.

"Her cheeks are even too florid for my notion of perfect beauty;—and her hair is disordered indeed!—untidy, I should call it; with the exertion of dancing, I suppose. And what could possess her to put such odious flowers in her hair?—they make her face look all of a colour with themselves!"

"You are a connoisseur in beauty and dress, I perceive, signior Hortensio;" said Bianca, with a playful smile, and another furtive glance.

"I hope I can recognize true loveliness when I see it;" said Hortensio, with an unequivocal look of admiration towards herself. "The pure and colourless modesty of the lily, has more charms for me, I confess, than all the oleanders that ever glowed."

"Oh, but you really mustn't criticise my friend's looks, or her dress, too severely, merely to show your judgment, signior connoisseur. I cannot allow that. I think Elvira's wreath remarkably well-chosen."

"Inasmuch as harmony of colour constitutes tasteful choice;" replied Hortensio. "The flowers match the cheeks precisely, it must be owned."

"Fie, saucy critic that you are!" said Bianca. "See, Elvira has finished her dance, and is coming this way: go and make atonement by engaging her for the next, or I'll never forgive you."

"On that condition, I obey your mandate;" said Hortensio, as he bowed, and quitted her.

"I've performed my duty-dance, now for my pleasure-dance;" said Elvira, holding out her hand to Hortensio, as he approached. "Who have you been dancing with? Oh, I see: my school friend, Bianca Minola. A dear little innocent milk-and-water thing, isn't she? Talks bread-and-butter,—lisps white-of-egg: but she's a darling creature, for all that! I can endure her insipidity, for the sake of her sweetness; she really is very sweet. But see here, what I have received! An invitation for signior Gremio's grand party, next week. Mind you get

one, also. The entertainment will be none to me, unless you're there so, be sure and come."

"How can I fail, with such flattering inducement?" said he.

"Go along with you, wicked pretender; it's you are the flatterer, I fear;" she said, as she went on to take her usual vivacious part in the trifling that followed up the previous specimen.

Signior Gremio's party was to be of the most attractive description. The company were to assemble in the beautiful grounds of his estate, where means were amply, and in tasteful variety, provided for spending the day in one round of pleasant out-door amusement. There were, dancing, ball-playing, battledore-and-shuttlecock, archery, and all kinds of active sports, at the option of the young people; there were swings put up among the trees, for such as preferred more lazy amusement; and there were shady seats, and turf banks, and tents, and a pavillion containing tables spread with ices, fruit, coffee, 'cedrata,' and all sorts of preserves, sweetmeats, and cakes, for those who preferred entire repose and refreshment.

Among the earliest arrivals were Elvira's guardian, with his fair ward and her friend Bianca. Then came Baptista Minola, with his daughter Katharina. Then Hortensio; then madame Ciarla, with many others; and then the rest of the guests poured in, in quick-succeeding groups. The host received them all with smiling courtesy; and seemed bent on playing the young heir, just come into his estate.

Some one of the guests, of a waggish turn, ventured to remark that it was generally understood, signior Gremio had convoked that fair assembly, to choose from among its fairer portion, the fairest, for his future bride.

"Whenever I choose my future bride, she shall be the fairest, depend on't;" said signior Gremio, fixing his eyes as he spoke, on the light golden hair that fell in profusion round the pretty face of Bianca Minola.

It was really edifying to see the innocent way in which she sat, plucking up the wild flowers on the turf beside her, looking the picture of soft unconsciousness—such as might have become a child of a few years' old, or a practised coquette of thirty; and after a pause, looking

up into his face, and saying: "I hope you won't be very angry with me, signior Gremio, for despoiling the sward of these little ducks of daisies; will you?"

"All here is at the command of my fair guests, for their special behoof and gratification;" answered he; "they cannot confer a greater favor on me, than by appropriating them to that end;" and he concluded by throwing himself on the turf beside her; which act of gallantry caused his senile joints a pang that would have twisted his features into a grimace, had he not covered it with the nearest thing to a smile he could muster.

There was a large group dispersed round the grassy bank on which Katharina, Bianca, and her friend Elvira, had seated themselves. The gentlemen lounged at the ladies' feet, or lay a little in the rear, or leaned against the surrounding trees; while light talk, gay jests, and repartees, sometimes of compliment, sometimes of raillery, flew from one to another, and were bandied to and fro.

Suddenly signior Gremio said, "I expect Giulio Vinci here to-day; he's not long returned from Naples, where he has been spending some time with an uncle of his, a captain in the marine service."

Katharina's face flashed scarlet.

"And who may Giulio Vinci be?" said Elvira

"A young friend of mine, for whom I've a great value. I rejoice that he has returned home time enough for my entertainment;" said Gremio.

"He's the boy I told you of, whom my sister was so unfortunate as to injure;" said Bianca in Elvira's ear; pressing her friend's arm, to draw her attention to Katharina's change of colour.

Katharina overheard the words, and said loudly and passionately:— "If ever you speak of that again, I'll make your meek blue eyes as red as a ferret's, with my nails."

There was an awkward pause. The company shrugged their shoulders, and exchanged significant looks, at this evidence of Katharina Minola's unabated violence, and shrewish tongue; and then, by degrees, they broke up into little separate parties, talking low among themselves,

or proposing strolls among the trees, or joining the dancers, the ball-players, and the other sporters.

"I shall despatch guardy to the house to fetch me a veil, or something, under pretence of the heat;" whispered Elvira to Bianca; "and then take pity on Hortensio, who has been leaning against a tree this half hour in hope of catching my eye, to beseech for a ramble together. I mustn't disappoint him, and make him despond altogether, poor fellow!"

Bianca had some notion that the impatient glances of Hortensio had been directed rather towards her own colloquy with signior Gremio, than towards her friend's with her guardian; but she uttered no iota of her thoughts. Only nodded, and said:—"Very well, dear;" and then resumed the smiling attention she was paying to the old gallant at her side.

Presently, signior Gremio proposed adjourning to the lawn, where the dancing and ball-playing were going on. He offered his arm to the two sisters to conduct them thither, saying:—"I'll find you a partner, Miss Katharina; as for Miss Bianca, I hope she will favor me by becoming mine"

"Never mind me; I shan't dance;" said Katharina; and when her companions had left her, she stood lost in thought, with her eyes fixed upon a certain tree, that she well remembered. Gradually, her eyes drooped, and fell to the ground; her nether lip was compressed beneath her set teeth; a frown gathered; her nostrils sank and dilated, dilated and sank; she breathed hard, and held her hands closely clenched, as she remained absorbed in reverie.

Presently, a gay, hearty, good-humoured laugh reached her ear, and a few words were spoken.

She started violently.

"Then she heard the voice say:—"She's here, is she? Object to meet her. To be sure not; why should I?"

"How contemptuously he speaks!" was her hurried thought.

Then, accompanied by signior Gremio, Bianca, and others, Giulio Vinci came towards her. She was making up her mind to repulse him

haughtily, should he offer to shake hands with her, as she thought that would be from his wish to assume superiority over her, and to show his magnanimity of forgiveness; when, on her turning round towards him he merely made her a passing bow, and turned to speak to some one else.

Soon after a game of ball was formed. A great number of the company engaged in it; and it proceeded with spirit.

Giulio Vinci had just made a long run after the ball, and was tossing it up into the sky as high as he possibly could, and catching it, while he returned to the spot whence he was to pitch it into Bianca's hand,—her turn being to throw it next.

As she caught it from him, she said:—"How active you are, signior Giulio! what a mercy it is, that you've no lameness—no weakness remaining from your accident! we ought to be very thankful."

The words were hardly out of her mouth, before Katharina snatched the ball from her sister's hands, and flung it over the wall. "I warned you not to allude to that again!" she exclaimed.

"Hey-dey, miss Miscetta! Are these your tricks still?" exclaimed Giulio, turning suddenly towards her. Then, seizing her by the wrists, he cried out:—"Run, some of you, and fetch the ball. I'll hold this little fury fast till you return." She writhed, and struggled; but not one jot could she move her wrists in his firm grasp. He laughed at her fruitless efforts to free herself, and said:—"You had to deal with a boy, then; I'm a man now, Miscetta, and stronger than you are."

"I care not for your strength. Let me go, I say!" she exclaimed.

He unclasped his hold, saying:—"There, you are free; but if you interfere any more with our game, you spoil-sport, I'll take care and prevent you effectually."

She laughed a short mocking laugh, and her eyes flashed, as she said:—"I make no promises!"

"But I do! and you'll see that I'll make them good;" said he.

The ball was brought back; and the game was resumed; but the instant it became Bianca's turn to throw the ball, Katharina seized it from her, and threw it over the wall as before.

She had no sooner done so, than Giulio caught her up in his arms,

and ran with her to a tree, at a little distance, near to which lay a cord that had been used for one of the swings. With this he proceeded to bind her to the tree, in spite of her frenzied stamping and struggling; while the company half laughing, half concerned, at the scene, looked on, expecting to hear her flame out with her usual violence.

But not a single word did she utter.

At first, she panted, struggled, and strove her utmost to prevent his effecting his purpose, her face, all the while, crimson with rage. But, after a time she grew deadly pale. For while Giulio was binding her to the tree, she suddenly became aware that it was the same from which her own violence had caused his fall, years before; in his exertions to secure her, the hair became pushed back from his forehead, and she caught sight of the deep-seamed scar that marked the place of the wound her hand had given him.

"A quite new and strange set of emotions overwhelm her, and hold her, as it were, paralysed in speech and motion. A perplexing feeling of shame and surprise takes possession of her, at finding herself completely overcome,—*mastered*. As the strong, manly arms, hold her firmly, constrained there to abide his will, she feels her spirit as well as her body give way, and own itself vanquished. One of the most singular features of this new state of feeling, is, that the sense of defeat, for the first time in her life, is not altogether painful. As her woman's frame involuntary yields to his masculine strength—as her feeble limbs bend beneath his will, and submit to his power, there is an inexplicable acquiescence, an absence of resentment and resistance, altogether unwonted, and surprising to herself.

Her silence, her turning pale, her ceasing from struggle and opposition, made Giulio, in his turn, relent. "Say you'll not meddle with the ball again, and I'll undo the cords;" he said.

She looked into his face; but was literally unable to speak.

Taking her non-reply for stubbornness, he turned on his heel, saying:—"When you're tired of your bonds, you can cast them off by a word. Call to me,—promise to let the ball alone, and I'll come and release you."

When he returned to the ball-players, he found several gentlemen standing round Bianca, engaged in bewailing the scratches which her sister's rough seizure of the ball from her hands had inflicted; she, with pretty shrinkings, and delicate hesitations, now winding her handkerchief about them, and now unwrapping and showing the scarce perceptible red marks, and lines, which made the little dainty trembling hands look only the whiter—a fact of which she was of course unconscious.

"Let me give you my arm to the pavillion, signorina Bianca;" said signior Gremio; "a little iced water with wine in it will restore you."

"A glass of water, then; for I own I feel a little faint;—perhaps, with the loss of blood. But a glass of water merely—no wine—I never touch it—I couldn't think of such a thing."

The sympathetic train of gentlemen attended her, as she proceeded to the pavillion; and the rest of the bystanders took the opportunity of following their example, to obtain some refreshment.

Giulio was following the crowd; but he turned back, went to the tree where he had left Katharina bound, and unfastened the cords. When he had released her, he drew her arm within his, and led her to the pavillion with the rest. There was something in this silent attention on his part—in the quiet decision of his manner—relieving her of all necessity for aught but passive acceptance, that was strangely pleasant to Katharina. She walked unresistingly by his side,—obeying his impulse, his intention.

But as they entered the pavillion, some one said:—"Here comes signior Giulio, with his fair enemy. He has given her quarter; and there's a truce to hostilities, for the present. Let's hope peace will last."

"See, he has linked his captive to his chariot wheels;" said another. "Or is it the generous support accorded by a conqueror to his vanquished foe?"

"I need no support;" said Katharina, withdrawing her hand suddenly from Giulio's arm, and pushing him from her with an angry gesture. But she belied her words, by dropping on a seat, as she spoke.

"My friend Giulio is making the most of his time, in gallant beha-

vicur to his fair enemies on shore, as he is so soon to encounter the enemies of his country on sea;" said signior Gremio. "My friend has just obtained a commission on board of one of our war vessels. He leaves us, to join his ship, this very evening."

A smothered cry burst from the lips of Katharina. To Hortensio, who happened to be handing her some cakes, she said:—"What's the use of holding the plate to me? Don't you see I can't take any? My hand's useless; my wrist is sprained."

"My poor sister! It's all owing to you, I fear, signior Giulio;" said Bianca; while her sister cast a burning glance at her. "You would bind her hands so tight round the tree. I'm really afraid you've hurt her wrists with the cords."

"No matter;" replied he, laughingly; "it'll do her good—teach her to take heed when she's spoken to, another time. She don't mind hurting and scratching others. Besides, she shouldn't have struggled as she did at first, if she didn't want the cords to hurt her. It'll be a good lesson to her how to obey; she'll learn what a man's power is,—and that a woman's best policy, to say nothing of her best interest, is to submit gracefully, and of her own accord, to that which can extort submission from her inferior strength."

But presently, under shelter of the talk and laughter of the other young people, which was speedily resumed, Giulio came round to the spot where Katharina was sitting, and said:—"Let me look at your wrist; I didn't mean to hurt you seriously. I hope I haven't really hurt you."

She raised her eyes to his face, with a strange expression of eagerness and scrutiny.

"Let me look at it, I say. I should be sorry if your wrist were really sprained, though you are a sad tigress, Miscetta."

"Don't touch it! Let it alone!" And she snatched the hand away, which she had just before extended towards him.

He laughed. "You are a sad tigress, now, an't you? A wild cat,—a cat-o'-mountain,—anything fierce, and savage, and fury-like?"

"What people make me out to be, they may take me for!" she said;

and she leaned over the sprained hand, and held it to her bosom, and rocked herself to and fro; while a hot tear or two fell upon it.

Giulio saw them; for he was looking earnestly at her, watching her with curiosity and interest; and the thought came into his head, whether she might not be in some measure right—that the character of scold and shrew, so universally given to her, wrought the very evil it ascribed—that it worked upon such a disposition as hers in making her worse than she naturally was—that it made her sore and irritable, and chafed her into fury, rudeness, and violence. He saw that taunts and reproaches were so far from correctives, that they but served as stimulatives to her temper; when, to proper controul, and a firmly maintained authority, it might probably be taught to yield. He was getting so far as to wonder whether by some one whom she could respect, and who would in return respect her foibles,—or rather treat them with toleration and forbearance, yet with judicious restraint,—she might not be reclaimed; when Hortensio called to him, and begged him to show the company the letter he had had from his uncle the ship's captain, who had given him an appointment on board his own vessel.

Giulio joined them; took out his letter, and began reading it aloud. It contained some very kind expressions of his uncle's pleasure at his having chosen his own favorite profession; promised to undertake his outfit; and gave him some good advice. Thus Giulio was proceeding, when one of the young gentlemen present, seized with a fit of caprice, or a fit of jealousy, exclaimed: "Come, we have had enough of the old admiral's prosing. I wonder you an't ashamed of repeating so many praises of yourself, Giulio. Here, away with it! And let us have some more ball-playing on the lawn." Saying which, with a fillip of the finger and thumb beneath the open sheet of paper, he sent it spinning out of Giulio's hand. The air caught it, and was blowing it across the room towards an open window, when, just as it passed Katharina, and Giulio made an eager exclamation, she sprang up, and seized it, just in time.

"She has caught it with her sprained hand, I declare!" remarked Bianca.

"And after all the fuss she made about her hurt!" said Elvira. "It

could not have been very painful, one would think, if she could use her hand so nimbly as that."

At these words Katharina darted an angry look towards them; and, crumpling up Giulio's letter in both hands, flung it right in her sister's face.

Giulio laughed; fetched his letter, and while he smoothed it out. and folded it up, to put it into his pocket, he said:—"I thank you, nevertheless, signora Katharina, for saving my letter; though you might have returned it to me in a more gracious manner."

Bianca meanwhile was making a vast deal of the blow on the lips she had received from the paper missile; calling upon signior Gremio and Hortensio to see how swollen her lip was; and receiving from them many assurances that the protuberance she pointed out to them, was only its natural pretty pouting rounding and fullness—that it was coral-red, and by no means black-and-blue, &c. &c.

Then Giulio took leave of his friend signior Gremio, saying it was high time he should be on his journey. He addressed a few farewell words to some among the company that were known to him; and at length came up to Katharina.

"Come;" said he to her; "let you and me part friends, for all that's past and gone between us. Shake hands with me—to show you have no malice."

She stood up, trembling violently, but made no answer; and kept her eyes fixed on the floor,—her face, neck, and arms, one glow of crimson.

"Thou'rt a strange creature;" he said. "But come, it may be for the last time; shake hands."

She seemed immovable.

"If you won't, you won't; I can't help it, Miscetta."

At that word, as if stung, she exclaimed,—lifting her eyes, and flashing them upon him,—"I hate you!"

"I know you do; you've proved that long ago;" he said, laughing; "but I owe you no grudge. Farewell!"

He turned away to the rest. Stationed them at the window from which they could see him at the last visible point on the road he was

about to take. "And then, when I turn, and wave my hat, do you all give me three loud cheers. And mind you marshal them, Hortensio; and see that the girls don't huzza out of time; they always will cheer badly,—either starting off before any one else is ready to begin,—or else raggedly, one after the other,—dropping in with a little additional scream when every body else has done."

He dashed out of the room, exclaiming "Goodbye all!" And then there was a huddling round the window, and a pressing, and crowding, and chattering; and little exclamations, from time to time, of "I see him! No, do you; where? O yes, there! Now he's going out of the gate—now he's going along the road—now he's coming to the turning—now he's reached the point. I see! he turns, and waves his hat! Huzza! Huzza! Huzza!"

As the echo of the last cheer rang through the pavillion, and died away in the distance, a deep sob was heard.

The party of young people started, and turned round. Bianca pointed stealthily to the seat on which Katharina lay at full length, with her face buried in her arms.

"Well;" said Elvira; "I think it is most unfeeling, not to say very selfish, of Katharina,—you'll excuse my saying so of your sister, Bianca my love,—but it certainly is very unfeeling and selfish of her, to be lying there, moaning and groaning, over her sprained wrist, instead of rousing herself to give a parting cheer to such a nice fellow as Giulio. Why didn't you join in the huzzas for the young sailor, Katharina?" added she, raising her voice that Katharina might hear what she said.

"I can't huzza;" said Katharina in a thick husky voice.

"She can't huzza *for him;*" said Bianca, in a low tone. "That's it. She can't bring herself to huzza in his honor;—she never could bear him,—quite as a child."

"I remember;" said madame Ciarla; "when both were children, they quarrelled dreadfully, and——"

She was interrupted by Katharina; who started up, saying:—"And you,—all of you,—how came you to be able to huzza for your friend? Mighty fond of him you must be, to be sure, to cheer and huzza at his going away!"

"O, if you're going to quarrel, Katharina, I'm off;" said Elvira. "You know there must always be two to a quarrel; and I never choose to quarrel with you—I should be sure to get the worst of it."

"You always have the worst of it, you should say, in your meanness, your sly pretences, your mock-modesties, and your show-offs of meekness, propriety, forbearance, and all the rest of the maidenly decorums which you and my hopeful sister affect;" said Katharina.

Elvira only shrugged her shoulders, and went away with Bianca, softly tittering and whispering together; followed by their train of gentleman-admirers.

For some days afterwards, Katharina remained more than commonly silent, and lost in thought; peevish, and tart, if spoken to; and very restless in her mood.

At this period, Bianca's visit to Elvira concluded; and she returned home to her father's house. By a compact between the two friends, they contrived to coax their respective household authorities,—Elvira, her guardian, and Bianca, her father,—into the persuasion that any farther schooling was unnecessary for them; and they were, in consequence, to return no more to the convent. Masters were henceforth to be engaged, that their education might receive the finishing polish. Bianca professed her love for study, books, and music, with an enthusiasm, which quite charmed her father, signior Minola; but which might have called forth some sneer from Katharina relative to the slight amount of either, that sufficed her sister at the convent, had not her attention been wholly absorbed in other thoughts.

In one of her restless moods, not a week after the entertainment at signor Gremio's, Katharina took a rambling walk down the road that skirted his estate. On one side of this road, there was a sort of dry ditch, or grass-grown hollow, that sloped upwards with a low green bank, surmounted by a hedge, which enclosed the extensive grounds belonging to him.

By some impulse,—unacknowledged to herself,—Katharina climbed up this bank, and crept into the hedge, holding by a young olive-tree which grew there, while she looked earnestly into the enclosure. She

soon distinguished the tree which grew upon the lawn; and for some time kept her eyes fixed upon it, her thoughts recalling the scenes with which it was associated. Again she saw the laughing boy seated there, idly cracking nuts, and carelessly swinging his legs;—the rustle among the boughs,—the fall—the bleeding temple—the pale face—the insensible form, borne away apparently lifeless. "I owe you no grudge—I owe you no grudge," her lips murmured.

Then she beheld the struggle, when he bound her there, to its trunk. She felt the clasping masterful arms—she saw the scar gleaming beneath the locks of hair—she felt once more that sight, and the force of manly strength and will, bending her to a half-reluctant, half-pleased yielding, beneath their combined potency of influence. And again she murmured; —"I owe you no grudge—Farewell!"

At that instant, voices approach along the road. Katharina shrinks closely within her leafy covert, holding fast by the olive sapling. The voices come nearer; and one of them,—which Katharina recognizes for that of madame Ciarla,—says:—"Yes, indeed, a frightful piece of news! Frightful in itself—frightful in its suddenness. So young! So full of life and hope! His first voyage, too. Just as he joined his ship—while he stretched forth his hand to seize the rope by which he was to scramble up her side to the gangway, the boat beneath him gave a lurch, and the poor young fellow fell overboard, sank, and was drowned. It is supposed, he struck his head against the keel of the vessel, for he never rose to the surface after he once went down."

"It's a shocking thing indeed, though I don't know the young man;" said the other voice; "What did you say his name was?"

"Giulio Vinci.—Bless me! what was that? A groan?"

The speakers stop, and listen. "No; nothing." The voices die away; and Katharina dropped from the bank into the grass-grown channel at its foot. She lay there some time, as if stunned. At length she returned to a sort of half-conscious, dreamy state, in which she got up and went home. The action of walking in some measure restored her; but she was still frightfully pale; which attracted her father's attention, and caused him to reproach her for being so perverse as to go out in the sun, during the heat of the day.

In the afternoon, just as the family were going to sit down to their collation of fruit, eggs, coffee, and bread and butter, Katharina happened to cast her eyes through the window, and saw madame Ciarla approaching the house. She instantly felt that the visitor was come to tell the fatal news.

Katharina went to the table, seized up a knife, and began cutting bread and butter. In came the gossiping old lady; and not a minute elapsed before she was launched into the midst of her story.

"Yes, too true! Poor dear young man! Drowned! Dead!"

Katharina dropped the knife, and held her clasped hands close beneath her chin.

"What's the matter now?" said her father.

"Poor Kate's crying;" said Bianca; "Though she couldn't endure him, yet she's shocked to hear of his death.

Katharina gave her one of her fiercest looks.

"What's amiss with your hand, miss Katharina? There's blood trickling down your arm;" said madame Ciarla. "Why, you've cut your finger! and mercy me!—very deep too! Let me bind it up. See how it's staining your frock!"

"You see, Bianca, my girl, you gave your sister credit for too much feeling—at least, too much feeling for others; she's crying over her own cut finger, not the poor drowned lad," said Baptista Minola.

"Nay," said Bianca, "I think it was Giulio's death, for——"

"How can you—how dare you, repeat his name? Take that, to remind you never to do so again in my hearing." And Katharina dashed a cup of hot coffee smack into her sister's neck.

Bianca screamed.

"Plague of my life! You've scalded your unoffending sister to death. Come hither, my Bianca. As for you, shameless, spiteful hilding! Begone to your room! and let me see no more of thee, until thou can'st behave less like a fiend, more like a christian."

Katharina flung out of the room—rushed up to her own chamber—locked the door—threw herself on the bed.—and wept long and bitterly.

The intimacy between Bianca Minola and Elvira Blangini, continued

as strongly as ever. Not a day passed, but the girls met at each other's houses. Now it was some flower, or some gossip, or some new stitch, or some new fancy, that had to be shown, imparted, and discussed. They were as profuse as ever, of their epithets of "dear," and "darling," "sweet," and "love," to each other, as they had always been. They kissed each other as fondly, they sat together as closely, they whispered to each other as confidentially as before. But notwithstanding all this, there was a feeling of mutual restraint; and a sense of hollowness in their friendship, that grew upon them more and more. Perhaps for this very reason, they increased in outward demonstrations of attachment, and professions of regard; so that every one remarked, how beautiful was the affection between these two young girls, and how touching to see their school-liking still preserved in such strength and constancy.

In secret, however, the hollowness grew and grew, until scarcely more than the mere empty husk of their sworn bosom-friendship was left. It was like the rind of a pear, eaten out by wasps and earwigs; all the pulp and sweetness sucked forth, while the worthless outside remained—a mere show and semblance of the fruit it once was.

Elvira's whole stock of vanity—and it was by no means small—could no longer blind her to the fact that she had ceased to be the sole object of Hortensio's attentions. She had so long been accustomed to believe them exclusively her own, that it was very difficult to persuade herself, that he was any other than her devoted though unavowed adorer. She for some time continued to look upon his gallant speeches to Bianca, as only a sort of reflection of the admiration which he felt for herself; a kind of liking for her friend, for her sake. But when they were not only repeated and multiplied, but assumed more and more of warmth in tone and manner, and were accompanied by significance of look and expression that were almost unmistakable, she began to think of some strong measure for recalling him to his allegiance, such as her self-love, and her long belief in his attachment, would not suffer her to imagine could fail.

She determined to bring to a decided avowal the long-hinted sentiments of her guardian; doubting not that, when her younger lover should be threatened with the chance of losing her, by a definite proposal

of marriage from another it would frighten him into a summary declaration of his own passion.

With so unscrupulous a coquetry as hers, with so cold a heart, so artful a nature, and so wily a tongue, it may be supposed that she was not long in effecting her purpose, so far as her elder prey was concerned. The amorous old gentleman, her guardian, caught only too eagerly at the bait held out to him. He snapped at once; made his proposal in form; offered to make what settlements she chose; and entreated her but to follow up her kind encouragement by forthwith promising to be his.

She, with well-affected modesty and discretion, required a few hours to consider of his proposal ere she gave her final answer; and then, having made sure of his absence from home, by entreating him to pay a visit to a friend whose estate lay at some distance, on the plea of wishing to have complete solitude for the important self-consultation which was to decide the happiness of her life, she took her way to the summer-house in the garden, and was not long in contriving to summon Hortensio to her side.

In the conversation that ensued, she found, to her dismay, that she had entirely miscalculated the aim of his affections. He plainly told her they were fixed on her friend Bianca; and by pretending not to see the amazement caused by his announcement, he effectually turned the tables on her own duplicity.

Her pride enabled her to make some show of concealing her disappointment, her resentment, and the crowd of conflicting feelings that tormented her; but the moment she decently could, she dismissed him, left the summer-house, and retired to her own room, where she threw herself into an arm-chair, and meditated on what should now be her course of conduct.

Her first feeling was of despair at having so fatally mistaken the sentiments of one, whom she now felt she loved but too fondly. Her next, was one of rage, that he should have so fickly transferred to another, that preference, which she flattered herself was fixed upon herself. Her next, that of detestation at the arts and blandishments of the little flirt who had lured him from her. In her despair, she rung her

hands, and vowed she would die. In her rage, she ground her teeth, and vowed she would turn her love into hate. In her detestation, she bit her lips until the blood sprang, and vowed she would have revenge. But at length, her despair, her rage, her detestation, found consolation in the thought that she would best satisfy them all three by an immediate acceptance of her guardian's offer of marriage. By this act, she would proclaim her indifference to the treachery of her lover and her friend; and by the wealth and importance it would secure, give her the means of eclipsing, mortifying, and triumphing, over them.

The thought of this, enabled her to meet her guardian on his return home with spirits sufficient to play him off a scene of coquettish compliance—of affected coyness, hesitation, reluctance, pretty diffidence, and young-lady fastidiousness, with a pretence of smothered liking beneath all, that put the old inamorato into a fever of admiration and delight. On the strength of it, he, of his own accord, gave directions to the notary that, in case of his death she should be secured mistress of all his wealth, by a no less ample jointure, than by constituting her his sole legatee.

Elvira was not long in giving herself the first of her proposed indemnifications for the sacrifice she considered she had just made of her youth and beauty. She called upon her friend Bianca Minola, to announce her approaching marriage.

"To your guardian! My dearest creature," said Bianca, "how could you think of accepting him? he's old enough to be your father. It is an absolute sacrilege to think of giving such passing loveliness, as yours, my darling Elvira, to such a battered old beau as that!"

"I must entreat you to remember, my sweet Bianca, that you speak now of my future husband; and I really cannot permit your partiality for your friend to lead you into the sin of injustice and disrespect towards my lord and master."

"I do him but justice, surely, when I say he is too old for my beautiful Elvira?" said Bianca. "O my dear! Don't let the phantom of riches dazzles you to the misery of devoting yourself to a silly disagreeable old man."

"He is neither silly, disagreeable, nor—so very old;" said Elvira.

"Is he not silly in wishing to purchase a young wife with his money? Is he not disagreeable in his attempts to play off the young lover and husband? Is he not old enough to be your father? And oh, my dear, darling, sweetest Elvira, consider how little can money compensate for disparity of years See here, darling, what a beautiful string of pearls, and what a handsome Venice chain, and what a rich damask silk, I have had sent me by a suitor of mine But in spite of all these fine gifts, I assure you, I don't mean to be tempted—nothing should induce me! He's too old for me—it would be wrong, quite wrong; and therefore I shall refuse him."

"And who is he?" said Elvira: unexpectedly in the position of hearing her friend's triumphs, rather than detailing her own.

"Old signior Gremio; he pesters me out of my life. So does signior Hortensio. I shall certainly have to complain to my father if these suitors persist in plaguing me so. Not a day passes but one or the other of them is sending me some fine token or other, of their troublesome attachment."

"Troublesome! Hortensio's attachment troublesome! Why do you encourage him, then, if you find his attachment so troublesome?" said Elvira.

"Encourage him! Goodness, I don't encourage him. But how can I help it, if he will admire, and besiege me, and load me with attentions, and presents, and protestations; swearing that he worships me, and me only, and that he's dying for me."

"He swears that, does he?" said Elvira.

"O la, yes! And fifty absurd things beside, of the same kind. But I'm not so silly as to believe a word of it, you know, darling, of course."

"Of course not;" said her friend rising to depart, and giving her a farewell kiss on the forehead. "You, so honest, so transparent, so innocent, so truthful, so artless, and so modest, know better than to credit the flatteries, insincerities, and false praise, of such men as Hortensio,—of such beings as suitors. They're all alike."

"That's the only merit of an old one;" said Bianca; "they're more sincere, perhaps; but then they're in every respect so odious. Goodbye, dearest darling! Since you are bent on having your ancient spouse—although (excuse the partiality of a friend) I think you're wrong—may all felicity,—all possible felicity,—attend your nuptials!"

"Hollow, deceitful, treacherous toad!" ejaculated Elvira, as she left her friend's house.

The marriage was,—in deference to the bridegroom's impatience—to take place in a few days. And immediately after the ceremony, the new-married couple left Padua for a beautiful villa they possessed, a few miles out of town.

A week after the wedding, madame Ciarla paid a visit to the Minolas, full of news she had just received It was no other than that on the previous day, Elvira's husband had been seized with a fit of apoplexy, which after a few hours' duration, had put an end to his life.

"Shocking, isn't it? Not a week married, and already a widow! So young too, poor thing!" said madame Ciarla in conclusion.

"How interesting she'll look in her widow's weeds, poor darling thing!" remarked Bianca

"Ah! you deserve to be a beauty yourself, as you are, my dear Miss Bianca;" said the old lady, who was more good-natured than deep sighted. "You are never backward in praising the beauty of others."

"I hope I know my duty better than to be envious, or anything that is wrong and wicked;" said Bianca.

"Dear young lady! you are famed far and wide for your mild behaviour, your beauty, and your modesty. Well would it be if your sister would take pattern by you."

"O, but she dislikes taking pattern—and she says she hates model-people. Poor dear Katharina!" sighed Bianca. "She disdains to imitate excellence. She does not wish to be good. She has not the least virtuous emulation. Poor dear Kate!"

Time went on. The young widow remained in wealthy seclusion at her villa. Bianca's character for sweetness, and artless modesty increased while Katharina,—her temper irritable and morose, her manner violent

and abrupt, her voice harsh, her words insolent.—gained the reputation of being a confirmed shrew. Her father, Baptista Minola, tired out with her conduct,—yet forgetting how much of its cause might be traced to his own habit of reproach, and to his having failed to see that she was surrounded with proper and curative influences of education, in moral and mental discipline,—found himself perpetually longing to get rid of her presence, by her marriage with some one who would remove her out of his way, out of his house, out of his daily seeing and hearing.

About this time he learned the views of signior Gremio and signior Hortensio, with regard to his youngest daughter, Bianca. But he informed them, that until his eldest was disposed of in marriage, he could not think with parting with her sister; adding, that either of them were welcome to take Katharina. This intimation,—as might be expected from its unfatherly want of delicacy,—was received slightingly and with open disrespect by the two gentlemen. Their proposals, Baptista Minola's reply, and the rejoinder, happened to be made in both the daughters' presence; and, enraged to hear herself thus treated, Katharina turned sharply to her father, saying:—

> "*I pray you sir, is it your will*
> *To make a stale of me among these mates?*"

The conversation going on angrily, Bianca says, first to Katharina, then to her father:—

> "*Sister, content you in my discontent.*
> *Sir, to your pleasure humbly I subscribe:*
> *My books and instruments shall be my company;*
> *On them to look, and practise by myself.*"

How the shrew is tamed into the submissive wife; how the scolding tongue becomes schooled to duteous accents; how the beauteous modesty and maiden mildness, show in their demure intrigues, their clandestine flirtations, their sly construings, with music-master and book-man, and

in their open unmasking, and native insolence of self-assertion, the moment the marriage-tie is knit, and the husband secured; are all set forth by one to whom the author of this poor story says:—

> "Well, you are come to me in happy time,
> The rather for I have some sport in hand,
> Wherein your cunning can assist me much."

FINIS.

TALE VIII.

OPHELIA; THE ROSE OF ELSINORE.

"O Rose of May!
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!"
Hamlet.

The babe lay on the nurse's knee. Could any impression have been received through those wide-stretched eyes, that stared as wonderingly as if they were in fact beholding amazed the new existence upon which they had so lately opened, the child would have seen that it lay in a spacious apartment, furnished with all the tokens of wealth and magnificence, which those ruder ages could command. There were thick hangings of costly stuff to exclude the keen outer air and chill mists of that north climate. The furniture of the room was constructed of the rarer kind of woods, and fashioned with the utmost skill and taste in design then attained. The dogs that sustained the fir clumps blazing on the hearth, were of classical form and device; and the andirons on either side, were of a no less precious material than silver. The sconces round the apartment were of the same metal; while the spoon, cup, and other utensils appropriated to the infant's use were of gold. Could any dawning sense of external objects yet have made its way to the brain through those wide-stretched violet eyes, they might have noted that a tall figure, of graceful mien, of gracious aspect, frequently came to bend over, and

utter murmured words of joy and tenderness, and breathe mother's blessings upon the little baby head. They might have perceived that another figure of less gentle aspect, but kindly and fond, would come to look upon the little daughter lately vouchsafed to him; and that still another, a young boy, would advance on tiptoe to peep at, and touch very carefully, the strange baby sister. Of the large broad good-humoured face that more constantly hung over it; of the huge splay hand that enclosed its own diminutive one in the recesses of the crumby palm; of the white amplitude of warmth, and softness, and comfort, and repose, against which the babe buried its nose and nestled its cheek, and from which it drew forth delicious streams of nourishment, the wide-stretched violet eyes probably gained clearer perception; for they learned to look eagerly for these evidences of the presence and the ministry of the good peasant woman, who had been engaged to perform the office of wet-nurse and foster-mother to the little Ophelia,—daughter of the lord Polonius, and of the lady Aoudra.

There were extensive gardens belonging to the nobleman's house; and in these the good nurse Botilda would carry her baby charge up and down, during the more genial hours of the day; while by the side of child and nurse, gambolled the young boy, Laertes. When the violet eyes learned to distinguish objects upon which they rested, they grew fond of dwelling upon the lively brother, of following his antics, of watching his sports; and then baby would crow, and spring, and leap in the nurse's arms, with sympathetic delight at his active movements.

When the sun faded from the gravel-paths, and the shadows lengthened, and the watchful nurse knew that the mists and dews of evening were stealing on, to take the place of the earlier afternoon warmth, she would carry her nursling in doors, and lull it to sleep upon her lap, and hush it against her bosom, crooning ends of old-word ditties, and scraps of antique ballads, such as she knew.

The lady Aoudra's attendant, Kraka, one day saw fit to call the rustic nurse to account for the subject of one of these songs, which struck her town-bred notions as somewhat lacking in the matter of decorum. "Hast thou ne'er a cradle-song, or proper nursery-rhyme, good Botilda, to chant

to my lady's baby? The songs thou choosest for the child's lullaby, are none of the most seemly for the purpose, to my poor thinking."

"I choose them not;" answered the peasant; "my stock of songs, God wot, is none so large, that I may pick and choose. I'm fain to sing such as I know; I care not for the sense, so that the sound serves to lull my little one; it matters not for the meaning, which is none to her, so that the tune helps to keep her quiet and to close her eyes."

"There's no knowing how soon a babe may catch a meaning," said the lady's maid, tossing her head: "meanings,—'specially naughty meanings,—are sooner caught than you, in your country rudeness, might suppose, good mistress Botilda. There's no telling how early a child may spy out wickedness in words—they're so 'cute in listening, and pretending not to understand, and all the while making out a deal that they oughtn't. There's much more o'that going on, than you'd think, mistress Botilda."

"Of a surety, children are not the only ones to spy out wickedness, and catch naughty meanings, where no harm's intended; and then making a pretence of over-innocence,—the more's the pity;" replied the nurse. "But as for my poor foolish old songs, I can't think they'd do mischief to any one that isn't set upon seeing more in' em than's meant—let alone a sucking-babe, that makes out nought of the words but the chime and the rhyme they make."

"No harm? no mischief?" exclaimed Kraka; "why, there's that tawdry nonsense you sing about St. Valentine's day. I should like to know what you make out of that; good mistress Botilda?"

"I leave it to you, to make out what you have a fancy for from it, mistress Kraka;" said the nurse quietly. "I can only say, as I said before, no need to mind the words of my song, so that the tune soothes my baby; no call to take heed of the matter, so that the murmur pleases her; it's no matter to me; and certainly no matter to the child, that can't make matter out of it."

"What stupid animals these country folks are!" muttered the waiting-maid; "little better than swine, in their brutish ignorance of what's what, and in their obstinate sticking to what they've once said."

"Let them that like to ferret out filth, find what they have a mind to, in my old songs;" said the nurse to herself; "only don't let 'em go and give their nasty notions to my innocent child; who, if ever she should chance to catch up the words by-and-by, from hearing me repeat 'em, would only do so, like a prattling starling, for the sake of the sound, and without a thought of any bad meaning."

Before the little Ophelia could run any risk of learning either words or meaning of the foster-mother's songs, inasmuch as it was before she could speak, the good Botilda's office of wet nurse ceased; she returned to her peasant-family, her native country-home; while Ophelia's own mother, the lady Aoudra, gladly took the charge of her little girl upon herself. She had hitherto neglected to fulfil the most important maternal duty, solely from the physical cause of disability. Not long, however, did she enjoy this new delight of cherishing and watching the infant growth of her child. Ophelia was yet a little toddling thing, when her father, the lord Polonius, received an appointment as ambassador in Paris, and was compelled to quit the Danish court for an uncertain period.

So distinguished an honour, as this official dignity conferred upon him by his sovereign, was a matter of high self-gratulation to the ambitious courtier; and he determined to fulfil his mission with such pomp, with such unsparing profusion of outlay, as should best prove how worthy he was of the office for which he had been selected. He resolved that as the representative of royalty, his travelling appointments should be princely in their richness, their magnitude; and for the like reason, his household and retinue, when established in the French capital, should be of even regal magnificence. In order the better to carry out his views of making his embassy as complete a semblance of royalty as might be, he determined that his wife should accompany him, remarking that a court without a queen, an embassy without an embassadress, were shorn of half their splendour and influence. His lady, dreading the lengthened separation from her children which this would involve, made an attempt to dissuade him from the arrangement, begging to be left behind in Elsinore with her young son and daughter, until such time as

they should be old enough to travel with her; when they could all three join him in Paris together.

But Polonius gave several weighty reasons why this could not be done; alleging that the first impression was the most important; that he was convinced greater effect was produced by the presence of a lady—that it attracted other ladies; that the more ladies attracted and attached, the better, inasmuch as the influence of woman's wit and woman's beauty had ever been acknowledged to be some of the most potent agencies in a court atmosphere; together with several other sage and worldly observations in support of his views, and ending with an intimation that, in short, it was his will she should go with him at first and at once. Without further opposition, therefore, to her husband's will, the lady Aoudra prepared to obey by making arrangements for the suitable placing of her children during their parents' absence. For Laertes, the boy, there was the protection of his uncle; a wealthy old bachelor, and retired general; who found the seclusion and repose of his arm-chair to be the sole refuge for which his wounds and their consequent infirmity had left him fitted. For the little Ophelia, her mother determined she should be confined to the care of her former nurse, Botilda. She resolved to risk the want of refinement in the peasant home, for the sake of its simple food, its pure air, its kindly hearty foster-care. She trusted to the child's extreme youth—scarce beyond babyhood—for security that she should not acquire coarse habits, or imbibe unseemly notions. She hoped herself to return to Denmark before the time when it was necessary to begin the inculcation of principle, the inspiring of ideas, the formation of heart and mind. Meantime she thought health of body, vigour of frame, activity of limb, the main things to be secured for her child; and this she thought could best be done by sending the little girl to the cottage of Sigurd and his wife Botilda. She knew they had children.—although they had lost the youngest, the one whose early death had procured Ophelia the wet-nurse services of the peasant,—and she thought with them, her own child would be brought up in health and hardihood, in exercise and open-air pursuits, and in kindly affection, even if somewhat roughly and unrefinedly nurtured.

The lady Aoudra determined to place her child herself in the arms of its foster-mother. She ordered her litter, and set forth on her short journey, consoling herself with the thought that she should at least see the spot in which she was about to leave her youngest darling; where she might picture her to herself hereafter, during the long tedious period of absence. She did her utmost to combat the sorrowful feelings, the half-defined fears that beset her as the thought of that absence pressed upon her; she strove to dwell upon none but cheerful thoughts and hopeful fancies for the future, that the present moment might remain unclouded in the remembrance of her little girl, who sat beside her, looking in her face, and asking her questions of the new places and strange objects among which they were passing. She exerted herself to entertain the child, that no suspicion of her own grief might interfere to mar the pleasure and enjoyment of this first journey, so full of delight and curiosity, and interest to the little one. At length the excitement, the constant demand upon her attention, the many hours past in the open air, which made its way through the curtain of the litter, caused the little Ophelia to fall into a profound sleep. Then the lady allowed herself to drop back among the cushions, and give way to her emotions at the thought of the parting that was so soon to come between her and her child. Weeping, and in silence, the poor mother travelled the remainder of the way,—praying earnestly.

All that she saw at the cottage of Botilda confirmed her in the previous conviction she had felt, that its advantages would outweigh its disadvantages. It was a clean wholesome place; its inhabitants were homely but kindly; and the lady Aoudra felt that her child would be healthfully and affectionately tended—the two great requisites at her age. She found, too, that the little Ophelia's chief companion would be Jutha, the only daughter of the peasant couple—a young girl of some fifteen or sixteen years of age, of the most winning appearance, gentle-mannered, sweet-tempered, and extremely beautiful. This afforded peculiar comfort to the lady-mother, as she knew how attracted children are by beauty; and how happy their existence is made by gentleness and even-temper, in those who have charge of them. To Jutha then, she espe-

cially recommended the care and tendance of her babe; knowing how superfluous it was to bespeak more of that which already so lavishly flowed in devoted affection towards it, on the part of the good nurse. And then the mother, assisted by these two,—who were in future to supply her place,—laid the sleeping babe in the rude wooden cot, and took a weeping farewell of her treasure.

"Let not the hot tears fall on the babe, my lady;" whispered the foster-mother; "they'll disturb her, an they drop upon her face; a mother's tears are not to be felt without bale and smart, even by one so young. Besides, parting tears bring no good luck; they're no blessed shower to sprinkle your babe with. Let her have a kiss and a smile, an ye can muster one, my lady, as a keepsake for the child, until ye come back to give her kisses and smiles the whole day long, as plenty as lips can give them."

An earnest pressure of the nurse's arm, told how well the kindly intent of her words was understood by the lady. By a strong effort, she succeeded in mastering her grief sufficiently to bestow a better-omened caress upon her child. The last kiss she gave it, as it still lay in a deep sleep, was almost cheerful, for she cast her eye up hopefully, and commended her little one to heavenly guardianship. Over the face of the babe, as it slumbered, crept a soft answering smile; and then the mother, accepting the angelic token, turned silently away, and stepped into a litter, more serene at heart than she could have hoped.

For some hours after her mother had left her, the unconscious Ophelia slumbered on. The journey, the passing through the air, caused her to sleep soundly; and there she remained, perfectly still, drawing soft regular breathings, with one hand beneath the peachy cheek, the other lying plump, and dimpled, and white, on the coarse coverlet. The rough wooden cot in which she lay, had been the resting-place of all the peasant-babes born there in succession. It was rudely fashioned but strong and safe, raised away from the ground upon high legs, which prevented the hostile approach of any wandering cat or other more formidable animal. It was furnished with bedding, coarse and homely, but clean and sweet-scented from the open bleaching; and,—by the care of Jutha,

whose pride it was to see it always kept neat and nice—a pretty object in the family sitting room. As Sigurd and his two eldest sons, Harald and Ivar, came in from their daily labour, at eventide, they went and peeped at the little stranger who had become their inmate. Sigurd said some kind words to his wife Botilda, of his being glad she had the little lady-babe to take the place of the one she had lost; and that it would do them both good to see the cot filled once more. The two tall-lads, who looked like friendly ogres, or good-humoured giants, looked at the sleeping child, as if she had been a young bird, or a half hidden spring-flower, nestling beneath a hedge.

"What a bit of a thing she be! she looks as easy to be blown away, easy to be looked through as sweet and as blooming, as a handful of rose-leaves, don't she?" quoth Harald.

"Ay, she do;" said Ivar. "She scarce loooks like a baby, such as you or I once was. What a pretty creature 'tis!"

The family sat down to their evening meal; while Botilda showed her husband the purse of money and the presents the lady Aoudra had given them to take charge of her child; told him of the engagement she had made, to forward them each month a sum for its maintenance; that the lady wished them to increase their own comforts at the same time; and that in consequence, she, Botilda, had provided an extra supper for them to make a sort of feast in celebration of her own little lady-babe's coming among them.

Meantime the infant Ophelia continued to sleep on. But as one of the good-humoured giants happened to forget himself, and give a louder laugh than he had hitherto done, the sound disturbed her; she turned, and opened her eyes, and lay awake. She was none of those fretful children, who, the very first thing they uniformly do upon waking up from sleep, is to roar; on the contrary, she lay silent and still for a moment or two, and then raising herself softly against the side of the cot, rubbed her eyes, and looked over. It was a strange scene she beheld; quite different from anything that had ever met them before. Instead of the spacious apartment, lighted by silver sconces, and hung with rich tapestries; there was a raftered low room, a rough deal table, round which

sat some uncouth figures on wooden chairs, eating by the light of a single oil-fed iron lamp. There was an elderly man, with a weather-beaten face, and grizzly locks; there was an elderly woman, whose face seemed known to the child who was staring at them; there were two very tall young men with bushy beards, rough hair, and good-natured faces; there was a boy with large hairy hands, a fell of shock hair upon his head, shaggy eyebrows, from beneath which gleamed a restless pair of grey eyes, and a huge bare throat that swelled, and moved, and showed the big morsels which he was shoveling into his mouth, as they made their way along the gullet to the stomach. The staring baby's eyes after dwelling sometime with a kind of uncomfortable awe upon this object, saw, lastly, that there was another figure at the table,—that of a young girl, beautiful and pleasant to look upon. The little Ophelia was still silently gazing upon all this; when the hairy boy gave a grin—mutely writhing his face; and then he pointed stealthily towards the cot, saying in a low growl, singularly harsh and discordant, though not loud,—"See; little court-lady's awake."

"My baby awake, and I not notice it!" exclaimed Botilda, about to hurry towards the cot, in fear that the child would cry, and be startled at finding itself among strangers."

"Let her be a bit!" said Sigurd, laying his hand on his wife's arm; "and let's see what she'll do: she don't seem a bit scared like, at all us new faces."

On the contrary, the child seemed entertained; and continued to look from one to another, patting her hand on the end of the cot, and humming a little song to herself; they all watching her the while with quiet, amused glances.

By and bye, she drew a long breath, looked round, and said:—"Mamma!"

Botilda and Jutha both now went towards her; doing their best to distract her attention from the thought, which had at length evidently struck her. With the facile spirits of childhood, this was no difficult task. She was brought over to the table to take her first rustic meal of bread and milk, which she did with much relish,—despite the absence

of the gold service which had hitherto administered her refection.—and with much apparent contentment, leaning against the familiar bosom of her nurse, frolicking and making acquaintance with the smiling beauty of Jutha, and graciously allowing the burly peasant Sigurd to curl her miniature hand round his great big horny forefinger. In short, the little lady-babe seemed at once to take to her foster-family, and make herself at home with them.

After this inaugural meal, however, when Botilda had, as a matter of course, taken charge of her nursling, Jutha contrived to secure the exclusive care of the child from that time forth. She had it to sleep with her, in her own little bed, the wooden cot serving for a day-couch merely.—she fed it, she washed and dressed it, she amused it, she danced and tossed it, she held it on her knee when she sat, she carried it about with her when she went out. She dedicated herself entirely to its comfort and happiness, and made it in return her own joy and delight. She would have been its servant, if such willing ministry as hers could be called servitude ; she would have been its slave, if such voluntary bondage as hers could be slavery ; as it was, she was the little creature's fond devoted girl-mother ; she had that peculiar affection which young girls have for a baby.—the childish, fondling, protective feeling, mingled with a sense of power, as towards a doll, or a plaything possession ; the tender, thoughtful solicitude, the instinct of motherly feeling, as towards a little being dependant on her for life and welfare.

On the morning after Ophelia's arrival at the cottage, she was sitting on the young girl's knee, in that half drowsy state of quiet, which is apt to succeed a violent game of romps. Tired with laughter, panting with exertion, she lay back to enjoy complete rest and silence ; while her eyes fell dreamily upon a figure on the other side of the room. It was that of the hairy loutish boy. He was lying half crouching, half kneeling, in a recess in the wall opposite, killing flies. As the insects buzzed and flitted to and fro, he eyed them from beneath his shaggy brows, with snorting eagerness, and tongue out-lolling ; ever and anon taking aim with his hairy paw, and at each successful dab that sent a crushed and mangled fly to swell the heap which already lay there, the lout gave a grin. Sometimes he would chop among the mound of dead,

with a knife that lay beside him; sometimes he would seize one of the living ones by the wing, or the leg, and hold it between finger and thumb, watching its buzzing struggles, and grinning at its futile flutterings; then let it go again, to pounce upon, and deal it its death-blow. The child lay looking at him in a sort of bewitched inability to remove her eyes from an object that filled her with uneasy wonder; while Jutha, accustomed to the uncouth cruelty of her idiot brother, Ulf, had not perceived that the child's attention was fixed upon him. Presently, Botilda's voice sounded from an inner room, desiring Jutha to come and help her with some household matter that she had in hand. Jutha placed the little Ophelia softly on the floor, put some playthings near her, and bade her sit still for a few minutes till she came back. The child sat, with her eyes unmoved from the fly-killer. Presently he turned, and spied her. He gave one of his silent grins.

"Are you one of the Elle folk?" he said.

No answer.

"Or the Trolls?" asked he again.

No answer.

"You're little enough; and pretty enough. But I remember, you re the little court-lady." He continued to stare down upon her, grinning; as she kept her eyes fixed upon him. "Come to the bear!" he exclaimed presently, in his discordant tones; "come here, and shake hands with me."

No answer, but a shake of the head; as she eyed the huge paw held out to her. "Come to the bear, I tell ye!" growled he. "I shan't eat ye. Only hug ye. Come to the bear!"

"No!"—desperately; with a more vehement shake of the head.

"What if I threw this at ye, and knocked off your legs like one of them?" said he, pointing with his knife to the heap of dead and dying flies stripped of their legs and wings.

Ophelia gave a startled scream.

In ran Jutha and her mother.

"Little court-lady's proud; and won't shake hands with Ulf, the bear;" he said, lolling out his tongue, and grinning.

"What have you been about, brute?" said Botilda. "Frightening

my baby, I shouldn't wonder. Take care how you ever do that, once for all, mind; or I'll beat you, as long as I can stand over you."

"And that an't long, now;" grinned he. "I get bigger, and beyond your strength; you hurt your own hands, more than you do my shoulders, when you thump me now."

"You limb!" said his mother, shaking her fist at him; "but mind my words. You dare not frighten my baby; and if ever you do, it'll be the worse for you. She's the great lord Polonius's child, sent here to be taken care of—not to be be harmed or frighted; and he'll punish ye, if I can't, should his child be hurt."

"I didn't want to hurt her; I wanted to hug her—and she wouldn't let me."

"Don't touch her at all, Ulf dear, to hurt, or to hug her;" said his sister Jutha. "She don't know that our bear's hugs are harmless. She don't know you're called in sport, Ulf, the bear. Let her get used to you, before you try to make friends with her. She got used to me, before she'd come to me from mother, you know, last night."

"You always make me do what you will, Jutha;" grunted Ulf. "But I don't mind pleasing you; you please me, and give the bear things he likes, sweet food—good eating."

"Sigurd's cottage was situated in a pleasant spot; one of the most fertile in all the island. It overlooked a green valley, embosomed in swelling hills; and towards the north-east it was screened by a thick and lofty forest of primæval trees. The soil in the immediate neighbourhood of the cottage was favourable to vegetation; but among the hills, it was rocky and sandy—more in keeping with the prevailing character of Danish ground. The air was generally temperate, though moist, being subject to mists;—which, in the more inclement seasons, became dense fogs; and in the winter there were fierce winds, with frequent snow, hail, and sleet. But during the summer and autumn months, the climate was far from ungenial; and Jutha took care that her charge should then enjoy as much of the open air as possible. They would go forth at quite early morning, and with some food in Jutha's basket, would ramble abroad all day long. Sometimes, they made exploring ex-

peditions among the hills; now stopping to sit among the craggy rocks; now loitering in some curious cavern or grotto, watching the plashings and oozings of the water that made its way through crevice and fissure, down-dropping amid the moss and lichens, and long stalactites, and bright spars that behung the roof and sides. Sometimes they would wander in the green depths of the forest; and sit on the moss-grown gnarled roots of some old oak or elm-tree, or beneath a spreading beech, or tall feathery ash, while the young girl-mother would bid the child mark the shape of the leaf, and branch, and bark and bough, of rugged trunk and smooth bole, until she learned to know tree from tree, and to amuse herself by distinguishing one kind from another. Jutha would point out, with rustic taste, the luxuriant masses of foliage that enriched the monarch oak; the noble strength and amplitude of its sturdy body; the vigorous growth of its giant arms; the strange grotesque forms into which its ramification spread, in sinuous and angular branches; the deep indentation of its leaves, the curious cup, and smooth fruit of its acorns; the mottled red and white of its apples; the pearly berries of its parasite misletoe. She would show her the straight smooth-rinded stem of the beech-tree, and how the pointed glossy leaves grew in palmated branches, and flat fanlike sprays, ever up-inclined, like huge sylvan hands raised heavenward. She told her which was the stately elm, with its graceful height, and amplitude of leaf and bough. She taught her to know the towering ash, with its light waving plumes of green; the birch, with its pensile sweeps of slender twigs behung with small round leaves;—the alder and elder, with their close dwarf clusters;—the firs and pines with their upright stems, brown-coned and sober in the sullen season, emerald-tufted and cheerful in spring-time;—the sallow, with its downy catkins;—the willow, with its sad-drooping tresses, mirrored in the stream. She would take her to bowery thickets in the wood, where the pansy and the columbine grew wild; and they would peep among the grass, for shy lurking violets, and pile up their basket with bright daisies, and bring home roots of rosemary, fennel and rue, for the herb-corner of their garden. Sometimes, Jutha would lead the little one as far as the seashore; where they would pick up shells, as they strayed along the smooth

sand; and when the billows came tumbling in, crested with foam, rolling over one another in huge monstrous frolic—like lion whelps at play—and when the sea-breeze blew freshly, and the spray flew over the rocks, bounding, and tossing, and breaking against them, flinging itself wildly apart, and abroad, in silver showers, as it caught the gleaming sunlight, the young girl would tell the child how these vast waters of the sea, that now looked so bright and gay, grew dark, and threatening, and angry, when the stormy winds of the north lashed them into fury. She told her of the adventurous men who put forth in search of the fish that abounded on those shores; she told her how they braved the dangers of shoals, sunken rocks, banks of quicksand, and whirlpools, to gain a bare livelihood; and how, sometimes, their boats were sucked in, and buried beneath the waves that now looked so buoyant and sparkling,—then murky, tumultuous, menacing; fraught with danger and doom.

For a few moments, the little Ophelia would stand with her eyes fixed upon the wide expanse of sea, surging, and heaving, and swelling before her; while a feeling of awe would creep over her, at the thought of a watery death—of the whelming billows, of the down-sinking struggle, of the stifled breath, of the stopped sight and hearing—of the heart-despair of those poor drowning souls, of whom she heard tell—the brave fishermen; then, with the true happy ease of childish spirits, incapable of long dwelling upon a mournful idea, she would turn once more to her shell collection; admiring their pretty colours, and curious shapes, and putting some of the larger ones to her ear, that she might listen to the sea roaring within them—as it were, distant, yet close beside her. These rambles abroad with Jutha were the pleasantest periods of the little Ophelia's sojourn among her foster family. When she was at the cottage itself, she was dull, uncomfortable, uneasy, with a vague feeling of disquietude and timidity, almost amounting to a sense of harm and danger. She felt herself strange and apart, among so many people nowise suited to her. After the first interest and curiosity excited by the vision of the little lady among them, Sigurd and his two elder sons, Harold and Ivar, took little notice of her, beyond a passing nod, or a good-humoured grin, when they were at home,—which was not often, or for long. They rose before it was well-nigh light, and were out and off

to work by day-break; taking with them the means for their noon-tide meal, and returning to the cottage only in time for the supper, which immediately preceded their retiring to rest.

Botilda was ever occupied with household drudgery, in which she frequently enlisted the services of Jutha; so that neither from the nurse or her daughter, could the child obtain much companionship, when within the house. She was thus thrown entirely upon her own resources; and these were few or none for procuring entertainment, never having learned to play, or to amuse herself, from any child of her own age. Children, from each other, learn the sports, as well as gain the ideas, proper to their time of life: and it is seldom that a solitary little one either thinks, acts, or amuses itself like those who have been brought up in the society of others. She would, for the most part, when at the cottage, sit still, watching Ulf, the idiot boy, with a sort of helpless, fascinated, involuntary attention. She had never been prevailed upon by his attempted advances towards an intimacy between them, any more than on the first morning, when she had observed his hideous sport, and he had sought to lure her towards him to be hugged; but although she would never go close to him, or suffer him to approach her, yet she seemed to derive a sort of desperate pleasure, and uncomfortable gratification, a strange, half-excited, half-dreading enjoyment in hovering about his vicinity, watching fearfully and wonderingly his uncouth ways. She looked tremblingly loath, at the very time she gazed upon him; shrinking and averse, while she hung about near his haunts: but it seemed as if she could not refrain from noting what possessed such mingled attraction and repulsion for her. It was with a kind of dismayed interest, that she would stand aloof, silently; or sit, perfectly still and motionless, to watch, with fixed eyes, and suspended breath, the ugly odious Ulf. Once, he was squatting near the hearth, with a huge foot clasped in each of his large hairy hands, his chin resting between his knees, his leering blood-shot eyes staring greedily towards a string of small birds, which were dangling to roast, by the wood embers.

"Have some?" said he abruptly, turning to the child, as he became aware of her presence; "they'll soon be done."

The little Ophelia shook her head.

"But they're nice, I can tell ye. They're nice to sing—but they're nicer to eat." And he smacked his great broad lips, that were drawn wide from ear to ear.

Ophelia shuddered.

"Hark, how they frizzle!" said he; and his large flapping ears moved and shifted as he spoke. "Sniff, how savory they smell!" And the black bristly nostrils gaped and expanded, while the blood rushed into his face, as was its wont, when he felt pleasure; and all the lines of his countenance were contorted, writhing to and fro, as he gave his peculiar silent grin.

Presently, he clutched the roast in his fist, and exclaiming:—"they're done! they're done!" held it out towards the little girl, repeating, "Have some? you'd better!" while his eyes gloated beneath his shaggy brows, at her, and at the viands.

"Isn't it too hot for you to hold?" asked the little Ophelia, as if she couldn't help putting the question—from wonder to see him grasp the burning food.

"Ha, ha! the bear's paw is too tough to be scalded; and I like my victuals hot;" said Ulf, thrusting one of the birds into his mouth, whole, crunching it through, bones and all, and then bolting it, at one gulp.

As the child listened to the noise he made, his fangs champing into the bones and mangled flesh, and looked at the savage greed with which he crammed, she thought he seemed some wild beast, ravening his prey.

There was something cruel, and malicious in this idiot-boy's mode of doing even simpler things than eating singing-birds, or killing flies, which gave an air of horrible meaning, in the little girl's eyes, to his acts. She saw him once tearing up a rose; and it seemed a tyranny and a barbarity, as if inflicted on a sentient creature. Leaf after leaf fell, as if they were rent limbs. When he held up the bare stalk, the stripped calyx and yellow centre looked like a skeleton; and he twitched out the golden stamens, as though they were eyelashes, or teeth. He appeared to take a ferocious delight in ripping up and destroying flowers; and would pluck off the winged petals from sweet peas, as if he loved to deprive them of their seeming power of fairy flight. The vindictive satisfaction

with which he exercised this power upon things of beauty and fragility, and the air of triumph with which he gloated over his work of ravage as he leered at her after each feat of the kind, made the little girl always feel somehow as if she were herself the bird, or the fly, or the rose, or whatsoever other object might chance to be the victim of Ulf's destructive propensity. And yet, he expresses liking for her, not enmity; but it seems to her as if his liking were destruction. More than ever she shrinks from his approaches; yet still she cannot resist watching him. Dread and disgust she feels; but withal a strange irresistible excitement, which impels her to look upon that she fears and loathes.

However, this is only when bad weather keeps her in-doors. When the sky is clear, and neither snow falls, nor winds howl, nor mists hover, nor rain-showers threaten, the little Ophelia coaxes Jutha abroad; and again they sally forth together for a long ramble through forest, field, or valley; among the rocks, or along the sea-shore.

And then the young girl amuses the child with telling her quaint tales, and singing her old ballads, such as she has heard from her mother. There is one strange legend of a princess who was shut up by the king her father in a high strong tower, to be safe from the bold seeking of an adventurous young knight who loved her well, but who had no other inheritance than his good sword and his brave spirit, to entitle him to match with one of so high degree. Nowise daunted by the difficulty of obtaining his mistress, the knight lover set forth for the strong tower, resolved to try if fortune and his own valor might not avail to rescue her thence. His road lay through a wild district where the storm-gods have their dwelling. He encountered successively Snorro, the divinity who holds the snow, hail, and sleet, at his command; Frore, he who scatters the crisp and sparkling rime upon the branches of trees, hangs frost-diamonds upon the leaves and weeds, and upon every blade of grass, and bedrops the eaves of houses, and roofs of cottages, and mouths of caverns, with long, slender, down-pending icicles; Drondror, he who bids the cataracts take their rushing leaps over crag and fell, and the mountain torrents their roaring, tumultuous course through rift and gully, sweeping all before them, and lastly he met Dumbrunderod, the mighty ruler

of the thunder, the dread wielder of the destroying bolts, the speeder of the fatal lightning-stroke. But not all the terrors of the storm-gods—not even the flashing glance, and fire-darting nostrils of the thunder-ruler, who rolled angrily and threateningly by, in his war-chariot, casting furious glances, and hurling scoffing words at the daring mortal who ventured thither, could cause the brave heart of the knight to blench one jot in its stout courage and determination. He restored the fierce glance, and gave back defiant words in reply to the storm-gods' contemptuous ones; saying that all the terrors of earth, air, fire, water, of the sky above, and of the dark regions beneath, would vainly strive to conquer his resolution, or to extinguish his love. That so long as life and limb were uninjured, his spirit would remain unvanquished, persisting still in its purpose to win his mistress, or die in the attempt. The storm-gods burst into a loud peal of mirth, that shook the surrounding hills. They could not but laugh to hear the puny mortal declare his small mighty will in opposition to theirs. The hearty laugh exploded with a crash, that sent a thousand echoes roaring through upland and valley, while Dumbrunderod swore that the human pigmy was a fine fellow of his inches, and showed a spirit becoming a better race; that, for his part, he knew how to allow for these fiery natures, hasty in their anger, prompt in their deeds, indomitable in their will, inevitable in their undertakings. He vowed that so far from resenting the knight's defiance of his and his brother storm-gods' power, that he applauded his ardor of courage and of love, and that it deserved the assistance it should receive. At first the knight thought this promise of friendly aid and protection was strangely evinced, for there suddenly arose a tempest of such violence that it seemed threatening to carry all before it to destruction, himself included. A hurricane of wind tore up trees by their roots, and scattered them far and wide; the torrents and cataracts pelted down the hills, as if they would have inundated the whole face of the plain; the heavens poured forth a deluge of snow, rain, sleet, and hail, all at once, while incessant claps of thunder rent the air, and sheets of lightning glared fearful illumination upon all this scene of gale and tempest. But when, at length, the knight succeeded in forcing his way through the storm-blast, he found that it had done its masters' work of

beneficent help right well. for upon reaching the strong high tower, he saw it levelled to the ground by a friendly thunder-bolt; which had struck it, leaving his mistress unharmed, who stepped forth from the ruins. flung herself into his arms, and fled with him that instant to a far distant country, where they lived happily thenceforth, safe from royal tyranny.

There was another story of Jutha's, which told of a wicked steward; who,—left in his master's castle, with charge to watch and guard from harm the lord's only child, a passing fair daughter,—proved false to his function of protector. stole the lady away from her home, and would fain have forced her into a marriage with his own unworthy self. But the unhappy maiden, resolved to die rather than suffer the degradation of such a union. flung herself from the window of the high chamber in which the false steward had confined her; and so, untimely, perished. Then the lord, her father, returning home to his castle, and hearing how it had been despoiled by the miscreant in whom he confided, ceased not until he had discovered his wronger, whom he caused to be tried for his heinous offences, and sentenced to death. In consideration of his treacherous breach of trust, and the death his deed had caused, the false steward was broken on a wheel, and died in cruel tortures.

One fine noon-day. when the heat of the sun had compelled Jutha and the little girl to seek the shade of the forest depths, Ophelia interrupted the story then telling, by exclaiming suddenly:—"Look Jutha! See there!"

Jutha looked in the direction of the child's pointing finger, and saw to her surprise, a milk-white horse. saddled and bridled. coming leisurely along beneath the trees, cropping the grass, and looking as if he had strayed from his fastenings. "The beautiful creature!" exclaimed Jutha. rising from the seat Ophelia and she occupied, on the spreading root of a tree; "What costly housings it has! It looks like a fairy horse,—the steed of some of those gallant princes in the stories! And it is gentle, too; see how it lets me lay my hand upon its bridle, and pat its neck. It is well trained, and belongs to some noble master, doubtless. But who can he be? And where?"

The young girl held the rein, and looked about her in perplexity;

while the white horse tossed its arching neck, nearly jerking the curb from her hand, pawed the ground, and neighed shrill and loud.

"Look Jutha!" once more exclaimed the child. "There among the trees—on that mossy slope—do you see?"

"He is sleeping!" said Jutha, in hushed answer; "and soundly, too; not even the neighing of his good horse can disturb him."

The girl and the child crept a little nearer to the figure they saw lying there. It was that of a man, in a rich hunting-dress. His plumed hat had been placed so as to shade his eyes during sleep; but it had fallen partly aside, and showed a face finely shaped, with features marked and handsome. One hand supported his head; but the other, ungloved, was white, bore more than one jewelled ring, and lay carelessly, near the half-open bosom of his vest, as if it had slipped thence in slumber.

"A fit owner for such a gallant beast!" murmured Jutha, as she turned to pat once again the neck of the steed; for the docile creature had suffered the young girl to retain his rein, and to draw him after her to the spot where his master lay. "Sure, a prince—no less; such a prince as they tell of in the wondrous tales I have heard. How passing beautiful he is! What can he be? Where can he have come from? From fairy-land—or from the court, surely;" added she, as she looked again upon the handsome stranger.

"Are there such princes at the court?" whispered Ophelia. "I came from the court, they say; but I remember none such princes there. I remember no one but my own papa,—my dear mother,—my brother Laertes—and those but faintly."

"You were little more than a baby, when you left them to come hither. It can hardly be, that you should remember them; said Jutha.

"But I do; though only dimly—as if they were a long way off in the distance. And so they are;" added the little Ophelia, musingly. "They are across the wide, wide sea; far away from me—but perhaps one day I shall see my own mamma again—I remember how she looked, well, when she leaned her face close to mine, as we sat together, journeying here; and how sweet her voice sounded, and how soft her arm and her side felt, as she hugged me close round, against her. I wish I could

have her to hug me close again—I wish she would come. I want to see her! I want my own mamma!" And the child looked and spoke plaintively,—impatiently.

"Hush, dear child!" said Jutha, soothingly; "Look at this brave stranger. See how bright and handsome his clothing. Look what a goodly, beauteous face he hath! He is as glorious to behold, as the king's son, who had a fairy for his godmother!"

Whether it was the plaintive tone of the child, or the animated one of her companion, which penetrated the drowsed senses of the sleeper; they were, together, sufficient to awaken him. He opened his eyes, and beheld the two young girls standing there, opposite to him, with his courser between them, the bridle-rein in the elder's hand.

"I have brought you your horse, sir;" said she, dropping her simple curtsey. "He was straying."

"And a fairer damsel to bring errant-knight his palfrey could not be found in all the realm of enchantment;" said the stranger, springing to his feet, and receiving the bridle from her; "surely I have wandered upon charmed ground, and you are one of its denizens."

"A plain country-maiden, none other, sir; and this her mother's nurse-charge;" said Jutha, curtseying once again, and presenting the little Ophelia.

"Still a charmer;—an earthly charmer, if you will—yet no less bewitching; said the handsome stranger. "Pr'ythee, tell me thy name, pretty one, and I will tell thee mine. It is Eric."

"And mine is Jutha, sir, at your service."

"Nay, an thou volunteer'st to serve me—to do my bidding, pretty Jutha, thou must call me by my name, as I call thee by thine. So, if thou wouldst pleasure me, thou wilt no more say 'sir.'"

"I would please you, indeed, sir,—Eric,—an I knew how."

"It pleasures me, believe me, to hear mine own name spoken with an artless tongue, and with a blushing innocence of face like that I look upon. Truly, thou seem'st an opening rose, Jutha, and yonder quiet little thing a close-furled bud, that promises to be just such another flower of beauty as thyself, when she shall have reached thine age of

bloom. In good faith, I may thank my lady Fortune, who brought me wearied from the chase to cast myself down in an enchanted wood, that I might dream a waking dream such as this."

"You were hunting, then, sir Eric?" said Jutha; when, as she spoke, a mounted horseman rode up, and addressing the stranger in a tone of respect that showed them to be servant and master, announced that the chase was concluded; adding that his majesty had noticed the lord Eric's absence, and had desired some one to search the wood, and collect stragglers from the hunting-train, as the royal party was now returning.

"'Tis well, Trasco; ride thou on; I will speedily overtake thee, and attend his majesty," said lord Eric. Then vaulting into the saddle, he raised his hat, kissed his hand, and saying "I must obey the king's command now, but I shall find a time to see more of my wood-nymphs," gave the spur to his horse, and was gone.

There was an end of the story-telling for that day. Jutha could talk of nothing else during the rest of the ramble, but of the noble stranger, of his handsome face and figure, of his gallant bearing, of his milk-white steed, of his unexpected appearance, and of his speedy departure. Perhaps it was because she had so thoroughly exhausted the subject, in thus discussing it with her young companion; or perhaps it was because they found on their arrival the thoughts of all at home engaged with other matters.—Botilda being busy scolding Ulf, and preparing the evening meal,—and the rest bent solely upon having the supper ready as soon as possible; but certain it is, that the encounter in the wood was never mentioned at the cottage by either Jutha or Ophelia. The young girl seemed satisfied with the interest it awakened in herself; and the child was of a quiet, retiring nature, which seldom induced her to communicate much with those around her. She was habitually silent; observant, rather than given to make remarks in words; contented to look on, to listen, to notice what was passing, and to let others speak and act, while she held her peace. Her nurse, Botilda, had long left her wholly to the care of Jutha. The good woman saw that the young girl and the child sufficed in companionship to each other; while she herself

had ample employment in the care of her idiot son, Ulf, whose gormandizing propensities, and mischievous pranks, required her utmost vigilance.

At one time he was found in the dairy, scooping the cream off the pans with the palms of his hands; holding some out in his great hairy paw to the little Ophelia, who stood there as usual, half quakingly, half wonderingly.—then supping it up himself, lest it should trickle and waste before she would advance. His mother cuffs him soundly, nay, gets a stick, and belabours him as long as she has breath; but the lout only pretends to blubber, "Hav'nt ye done yet, mother?" while by his sly grin, he shows that her woman's arm fails to inflict any very severe chastisement.

"Cub that thou art! thou shalt feel the weight of thy father's cudgel, an I catch thee at any more of thy pilfering tricks!"

At another time, he was discovered in the store room, stealing the honey-comb that had just been collected from the bee-hives. Ophelia finds him there, lurking in a corner sucking his paws, with greedy joy gleaming in his eyes. "They call me Ulf the bear. Ha, ha! The bear's fond of honey!" he said, with a grin, as he swilled and licked the handfulls of streaming comb.

"Taste! It's luscious-nice! Taste some of the bear's honey." And, with his usual uncouth wish for her to share, he held some towards the child.

She shrank back. "It isn't yours. Best not touch it."

"Hush! Mother'll hear."

But his mother had already heard. She fetched Sigurd, who happened that day to be at work upon something that wanted doing at the cottage. And in a few minutes more, Ophelia stood scared and trembling at the terrible sounds that reached her ear, of the father's blows, of Ulf's cries, more like the howls of a wild beast, than anything human.

Among these rough cottage people, more and more did the child feel herself alone and apart. Her shyness and sparing speech grew upon her. She was not unhappy; but she became grave,—strangely

quiet and reserved for a little creature of her years, and so confirmed in her habit of silence, that she might almost have passed for dumb. She might be said to feel her uncongenial position without understanding it; she did not comprehend what made her serious, but she was rarely disposed to cheerfulness; she did not know why she was disinclined to talk, but she seldom met with any inducement to open her lips, and insensibly she kept them closed. With her sweet, earnest eyes, her placid though unsmiling countenance, and her still demeanor, she had a look of reflection,—of pensiveness, that better becomes womanhood grown, than childhood. Childhood should be free from heed; light-hearted, undreading; encouraged in its frankness, its confidence, its every hopeful, eager, thought and word. Still, however, she had one resource—her one companion, with whom she could assimilate, and feel at ease. With Jutha, rambling abroad, she was never dull, never sad; with her, her heart knew no heaviness, no misgiving, no loneliness; with her, her spirits rose to gladness, and she was, for the time, unreservedly happy. She used to spring forth into the open air like a young bird newly franchised, escaped from restraint, and soaring into its native element of buoyancy and freedom. With her hand in Jutha's, she would bound along, eager to take her fill of liberty, body and mind. Her spirit, no less than her limbs, seemed to revel in this season of unrestriction. For she then knew the joy that knows not how it is joyful; she felt the glee that asks not why it is glee,—the joy and the glee of that age which should know no shadow of care.

For some reason best known to herself, Jutha now invariably took the way towards the wood. Their former walks among the rocks, or along the sea-shore, were all abandoned, on some pretext or other, in favor of the path which led through the forest; and the little Ophelia, loving the mysterious grandeur of its high-arching trees, was well pleased it should be their constant resort. On one of the first mornings they returned there, they had strolled far into its woody recesses, Jutha, as usual, entertaining her young companion with tales and marvels; but her tone was hurried, her attention seemed elsewhere; and her look, expectant at first, grew every moment more thoughtful and vexed.

Suddenly, it brightened; and Ophelia, following the direction of her eyes, saw, coming towards them, the figure of lord Eric, on his milk-white horse. He threw himself from the saddle the moment he descried them, and eagerly approached. He seemed overjoyed to meet his nymphs of the wood, and sauntered long by their side, leading his horse by the bridle, talking and laughing animatedly. He shared their grassy seat, when they stopped to rest from the noontide heat; he shared the contents of their basket, when they produced their noontide meal, declaring he had never tasted daintier fare; he gave himself up to the spirit of the forest ramble, as though he could wish no pleasanter enjoyment. Morning after morning, he returned to make one in the wood-party; and never had the hours thus spent, seemed to fly by so lightly. Certainly, Jutha found it so; for the shadows of evening would steal upon them, with warning to return home, ere she could well believe it to be afternoon. The little Ophelia was less charmed with this addition to their society. She cared not that the stranger should come; she had always found sufficient delight in listening to Jutha, in walking and wandering with her; and though this gentleman was a very sprightly companion, and talked gaily and good-humoredly, yet as his conversation was chiefly addressed to Jutha, and was often carried on in a voice that scarce reached beyond her ear, it soon became productive of little entertainment to the child. Gradually, it grew to be exclusively confined to the two others, and the little girl was left to entertain herself, as she best might, with her own thoughts, or her own resources. She by degrees perceived that they were too much occupied with each other to be able to give much attention to her. She had hitherto been accustomed to have every question answered, every enquiry satisfied; her friend Jutha had till now been always ready to furnish her with replies, and even to supply her with fresh store of amusement from her own talk; it was otherwise, since this stranger had intruded upon their pleasant wood rambles. Jutha had now no look, no word but for him. But then she herself seemed so contented, that her child friend could not altogether find in her heart to regret what made Jutha so evidently, so radiantly happy. She had never seen her look so full of joy,

so full of spirit. Her eye sparkled, her color rose, her voice had exultation in its tone, as she took her way, with Ophelia, to these rambles in the wood—where they were sure to be joined by their new acquaintance.

Once, on meeting him, the child saw his face assume a vexed look, as it rested upon her. He turned to Jutha, and pointing to a nosegay she wore in her boddice, he said, "Why bring flowers? I can gather you some fresh, here. Leave them at home, I beseech you, another time; especially the rosebuds."

He said the last words with emphasis, though he dropped his voice as he uttered them. But Jutha answered simply, as she drew the flowers from her bosom, "I brought them for you; I thought you would like some of our garden-blossoms. They are but wild-flowers that grow here in the wood."

He took them from her offered hand. "I love wild-flowers,—wood-flowers best of all. Yet I thank thee, that thou thought'st of Eric in gathering these," said he, in his low-breathed tones. "Still, canst thou not still farther pleasure him, by omitting to bring with thee the green, unopened bud? Thou know'st, the blowing rose, with its rich beauty of colour and fragrance, is the one he could look upon, never tiring, to the exclusion of every flower else."

He glanced for an instant at Ophelia, as he pronounced one part of this speech, with a look, which she had before noted in his face; and which had told her plainly enough that he not only ceased to include her in the conversation he addressed to his nymphs of the wood, but that he would be heartily glad to have her out of hearing, nay, to be rid of her presence altogether.

The child thought to herself,—"He wishes me away; but till I see that Jutha does, also, I shall not go. I wish *he* were away; Jutha and I were very happy together, till he came; I know what he means, about the rosebud: but, till I find Jutha wants me out of hearing, I shan't stir."

So far from Jutha wishing her to leave them, Ophelia could hear that she was resisting lord Eric's urgently repeated request that she

would "send the garden rosebud to gather wild ones," with such sentences as, "I dare not, indeed, my lord; my mother gives her to my care; I must not let her stray out of sight."

He seemed still to plead against these objections; to over-rule them by asking what harm could come to her charge, in this quiet, solitary place; adding, "Send her from us; I cannot speak to you as openly as I would, sweet Jutha, with that child listening to every word I utter. I want to speak to you fully—entirely."

"What can you have to say to me, my lord, that she may not hear? You can have naught to tell me, that"——Jutha's voice trembled, and a bright color stole into her face. Then in a voice that strove for more firmness, but which still hesitated, she went on: "Were I to send her away, she would be sure to come back in fewer moments than your lordship thinks; she does not like to be from me long."

"For however few moments,—for however short a space; I would have you to myself, were it but for one instant. Do not refuse me, Jutha."

The young girl seemed still to hesitate; and the child could hear him mutter some reproach about "want of confidence, and not trusting him;" which seemed to have more effect in moving Jutha than anything he had yet said. She stopped, hung her head, and faltered something in reply. Lord Eric led her to a seat on the turf beneath a goodly beech-tree; then turning to Ophelia, he said, in his most persuasive tone of gaiety and good-humor, as he unfastened the knot of a bright silken scarf, which hung across his shoulder, "Here, take this, my little maid; I give it thee for a sash, an thou wilt go gather me all the gay crow-flowers, king-cups, and daffydowndillies thou canst find in the forest, to make a chaplet for this queen of the woods,—thy fair friend Jutha."

"I don't want the sash;" said the little Ophelia, drawing back, as he attempted to put it round her. "Nor do you want the flowers. You want me to go away,—out of hearing, while you tell Jutha some secret you have for her. I do not care to do what you wish, because you tried to make me believe the pretence of the flowers and the sash, instead of

asking me at once to leave you. But I do care to please Jutha; and if she tells me she wishes to listen to your secret without my hearing, I will go away at once."

Jutha said nothing; but there was the bright color in her cheek, which Ophelia could see, though the young girl still hung her head.

"Jutha *is* curious to learn the secret you have to tell her; I can see she is!" said the child, peeping under her friend's drooping face. "I'll go then; and I'll stay away a long while, that you may have your talk out freely."

The young girl made a faint attempt to detain her; but it was unperceived by Ophelia, who walked straightway among the trees, bent upon relieving them of her presence. Once out of sight and hearing of her late companions, the child strolled on more leisurely; now pulling some stray twig or blossom that caught her eye as she rambled along; now stopping to peer into some briery tangle of close underwood, some leafy brake or thicket, where she fancied she would spy a bird's nest; now halting to watch some scrambling squirrel, that would dart up the barky trunk of a high tree, till he reached the topmost bough, whence he would slyly peep down at her in triumphant security. And still as she wandered on, trying to amuse her thoughts thus, they would ever and anon recur to the question of what could be the secret the gentleman had to tell Jutha. "Yet why should I ponder farther upon it? It is clear, they did not wish I should know it, or they would not have sent me out of the way while it was telling. If I endeavor to find it out by guessing, it is almost as bad as trying to do so by listening. I won't guess any more. I won't even think about it. I'll see if I can find the beautiful white horse; and amuse myself by feeding him."

And many times after this, Ophelia was glad to find in the noble horse a source of entertainment during her solitary rambles. For her walks in the forest were all solitary now. Whatever might be the secret lord Eric had to tell, it was evidently not to be told in one conversation; for, time after time, he made pretexts to send Ophelia away, while he and Jutha talked alone, and the child, finding that her friend no longer sought to detain her by her side, left them together undisturbed. Though she herself could not feel so happy, separated thus frequently from her

kind girl-companion, with whom she had formerly spent such pleasant hours, yet, so long as Jutha seemed the happier by the arrangement, Ophelia could fancy that it contented herself.

But after a time, Jutha's look of joy faded; her spirits, that at first seemed almost too exuberant,—as if they must needs express the secret gladness she hoarded at heart, in bright looks, and a mirthful tone of voice that finding speech too sober, would often break forth into bursts of song,—varied frequently; the air of inward ecstacy, and conscious rapture involuntarily betraying itself in a thousand vivacious gestures, was exchanged for an appearance of anxiety and uneasiness. There were moments when her joyful looks rekindled; her exuberance of gaiety returned; but it was fitfully; her spirits fluctuated; she was alternately at height of glee, or lost in thought. She would still, in her cheerful moments, break out into snatches of the song which was her favorite at this time:—"For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy;" singing with an eager look, and exulting expression of voice; but there was solicitude mingled with the eagerness; there was forced mirth in the tone of exultation. These periods of cheerfulness grew rarer, and less lasting. They were more often replaced by fits of thoughtfulness, and brooding anxiety. The sparkling, bright up-look, gave way to a downcast expression; or when the eye was raised, it was with a beseeching appeal in its tearful sadness.

The altered manner of the young girl escaped the notice of the cottage inmates; but the child observed the change in her friend, and sorrowed wonderingly. Once, returning to the bank where she had left Jutha seated in one of her saddest moods, Ophelia found her restored to sudden gaiety. Lord Eric had arrived, while the child was away, and was talking cheeringly and encouragingly to his companion, while one of his arms was thrown about her, holding her close to him.

Jutha withdrew from the clasping arm, as the child approached, looking bashful and embarrassed; but at the same time so happy, and so much her bright, former self, that Ophelia in her innocent affection for her friend, could not help hoping that their forest acquaintance might always come and console Jutha, with his kindness of word and manner, when she should be out of spirits.

But time goes on; and the young girl's dejection increases. Ophelia

finds her one evening, sitting by the rivulet, wringing her hands, and sobbing. The child soothes her fondly; asking what grieves her.

Jutha attempts to deny that she has been weeping; but Ophelia replies:—"You bathe your eyes in the water of the stream, that I may not see the tears, but I know that you have been crying. Tell me what makes you cry, Jutha?"

Jutha only shook her head, trying to stifle a sob that would be heard.

"If you care not to tell your grief to such a little thing as I am, who can comfort you with no help, or council, why not tell your mother what grieves you? I often wish I could tell my own mamma what I think and feel. Tell our good mother, if any thing grieves you, Jutha."

"But nothing grieves me—I can't tell her;" faltered the young girl.

"Then tell our friend of the wood—your friend—lord Eric; he seems kind, and fond of you, Jutha."

"So long as he is fond of me—so long as he is my friend—nothing can grieve me;" said Jutha. "But nothing does grieve me. Come, what are we talking of grief? Let us return home; and I'll tell you a story by the way"

"I shall like that; it is long since I heard one of your stories, Jutha. I shall love to hear one again."

Jutha rejoiced to find that she had succeeded—as she had hoped to do—in turning the child's attention from herself to the promised tale. But though Ophelia looked up in her friend's face, with the eagerness of expectation, it did not prevent her from noting, with the sorrowing acuteness of loving perception, the many tokens of altered mien, to be read there.

She remembered Jutha's brilliant color; her beautiful face with its sunny look of health and liveliness; her easy, alert gait; the spotless nicety of her neat-fitting garments; and though so young a child, Ophelia perceived the contrast they presented with the thin, white cheeks, the hollow eyes, the slouching heaviness of person and carriage, the disordered dress, the general air of depression and self-abandonment.

The change, although so great, had been so gradual, that the parents

and brothers of Jutha, in their obtuseness of perception, and care of other matters, had still not observed it: but it had long attracted Ophelia's eye; and now it smote upon her heart with more painful force than ever.

"How the wind howls! What a dreary autumn evening it is!" said Jutha, looking round her at the darkening sky. "See how the leaves whirl, and fall! The trees will all be bare soon; and then comes winter —cold, cold, winter. No more forest walks, when the trees are bare! 'They bore him bare-faced on the bier,'——That's not the song I am thinking of," she muttered.

"You think of sad songs now, Jutha;" said the child. "Where are your merry ones?"

"Where indeed? Gone! All gone! 'He is gone, he is gone, and we cast away moan.' Ay, that is it!" And she began to chant in a mournful voice:—

"'And will he not come again?
And will he not come again?
No, no, he is dead.
Go to thy death-bed,
He never will come again.'"

"Who is dead, Jutha? You frighten me;" said the child.

"No one is dead;" said the young girl, quickly. "Who said he was dead? They say dead and gone; but we may be gone, without being dead, mayn't we, little one? She spoke in a sharp, abrupt tone, as if she would fain have made it sound jestingly. Then she hurried on —"Do you hear the owl hoot? See, yonder she flies, with her flappy wings, and mealy feathers. I'll tell you a story about dame owl. I promised you a story, you know. Listen."

"I am listening, Jutha."

The young girl told her the legend as she had heard it. She told her that when He who had pity in his heart for the veriest wretch that crawls —for the dying thief—for the erring sinner—even for her whose sins were many;—when He who taught divine pity and charity above all things, walked the earth in human shape, and suffered human privation in the

plenitude of his merciful sympathy with poor humanity, it once upon a time befel, that He hungered by the way, and seeing a shop where bread was baking, entered beneath the roof, and asked for some to eat. The mistress of the shop was about to put a piece of dough into the oven to bake; but her daughter, pitiless of heart, declaring that the piece was too large, reduced it to a mere morsel. This was no sooner done, than the dough began to swell and increase, until, in amaze at its miraculously growing size, the baker's daughter screamed out, like an owlet, 'Woohoo—hoo—hoo!' Then He who had craved food, held forth his hand; and, in the place where she who lacked charity had stood screaming, there was a void; but against the window, beating its wings, hooting, and struggling to get out, was a huge mealy-feathered owl. It forced a way through, took flight, and was seen no more; excepting when some night-wanderer descries the ill-omened bird skulking in the twilight wood, or obscure grove; and then he murmurs a prayer, to be delivered from the sin of uncharitableness, as he thinks of the transformed baker's daughter.

That evening, on their return to the cottage, it seemed to Ophelia, that those at home, first became aware of the change in her friend Jutha, which she had so long perceived and lamented. But it also strangely struck her that instead of this discovery awakening kindness and compassion towards the sufferer, it appeared to excite rather anger, reproach, and even invectives. Their voices were raised in a confusion of questions, threats and expressions of wonder, with which they assailed the young girl, in an incoherent clamour, from which the child could make out nothing clearly. The mother bemoaned her own and her daughter's fate; the father murmured deep curses; the two elder brothers, strode angrily to and fro with menacing looks, ground teeth, and clenched hands. The idiot boy sat jibbering, and croaking a harsh wailing cry in one corner; adding to the general discordance. Jutha had flung herself upon a chair in the midst; upon the back of which she leaned, burying her face in her arms. From time to time she uttered convulsive sighs; heavy sobs burst from her, each seeming to rend her frame asunder; but else she preserved a sullen, despairing silence as sole reply to the clamorous enquiry that surrounded her.

Ophelia crept away softly to bed, unable to make out the meaning of this distressful scene; and marvelling much why they should show displeasure instead of sorrow at Jutha's illness; why they should seem to resent, rather than to compassionate; why they should 'overwhelm her with reproaches in the midst of her unhappiness, instead of seeking to comfort and console. For some time, she lay pondering on these things; full of concern and wonder; wishing Jutha to come to bed, that she might assure her of her sympathy, at least; and longing to see if caresses, and loving words of pity and tenderness might not avail to lessen her poor friend's grief. But the hours crept on, and the little one's affectionate anxiety yielded to drowsiness. She slept; but it was an uneasy sleep, full of dreams, and haunting ideas of wretchedness and perplexity. From this slumber she awoke strugglingly, and with a beating heart. It was pitch dark; she felt that many hours had elapsed, and that it was dead of night. She stretched out her arms, to feel for Jutha at her side; but no Jutha was there. In alarm, she started up. What could have kept her away? Was she worse? Was she unable to move? Was she still in the midst of that confusion of angry voices? The child listened. All seemed still below. What then could prevent Jutha from coming up to her room,—to lie down, and to get the rest she so much needed?

In alarm for her friend, in an irresistible desire to learn how she was, and what detained her, Ophelia stole out of bed, and groped her way down stairs. On reaching the door of the sitting-room, she saw a bright streak from the crevice at the bottom, which showed her there was light in the room. She felt for the latch above her head; and succeeded in finding, and unfastening it. She pushed open the door; but the blaze of light from within, suddenly contrasted with the obscurity from which she had emerged, made her pause. She stood on the threshold, gazing in, trying to distinguish the objects the room contained. On the large table, which occupied the centre of the apartment, lay something extended, which was covered with a white cloth. At one end were ranged as many iron lamps as the cottage household afforded, burning in a semicircular row. Amazed at this strange sight, the child advanced; and

with an uncontrollable impulse, walked straight up to the table, and raised the end of the white cloth, nearest to the lamps. Their light fell full upon the object beneath. Startled, and shuddering, the child looked upon that which was so familiar, yet so strange. Could that indeed be the face of Jutha?—that white, still, rigid thing?—with those breathless, motionless lips, and those eyelids, that looked fixed, rather than closed? And what was that, lying upon her breast, encircled by her arm? A little, little face—a baby's face! It looked so transparent, so waxen,—so pretty, though so strangely image-like, that the child involuntarily stretched forth her finger, and touched its cheek. The icy cold, shot, with a sharp thrill, to her heart, and she screamed aloud, as she turned to Jutha's face, and flung herself upon it with wild kisses and tears.

Botilda, hearing the cry, came running in. She used her best efforts to calm the mourning and affrighted child, carrying her up to bed, lying down by her side, folding her in her arms, and speaking fondlingly and soothingly to her, until she dropped asleep. But it was long ere this was accomplished; and for many successive nights, the nurse had to sleep in the room with her charge, that she might be won to rest. The shock she had received, was severe; and long left its effects upon her sensitive organization. Naturally gentle, she became timid. She shrank about, scared, and trembling; fearful of she hardly knew what, but feeling unassured, doubtful, full of a vague uneasiness and alarm

Ulf's hideousness shows more horribly than ever in her eyes. He seems to her some fiend-like creature as he crouches there, drawing the flaps of his ears over till the tops reach beneath his chin; pulling his nether lip down, and turning it inside out, till it lies stretched, and spread, displaying his cankered gums, and his yellow and black teeth,—some flat, like tomb-stones,—some long, narrow, and sharp, like the fangs of a dog. His manner to herself puzzles and torments her; for it is capricious, and varies accordingly as he meets her alone, or with others. When the family are present, he treats her roughly; speaks of her jeeringly as the little princess, or the little court-lady; and twits her with pride,—complaining of her silence as haughty, her keeping him at a dis-

tance as arrogant and insolent. When, however, by any chance, they are by themselves, he becomes cajoling, and tries all means to effect his purpose of approaching her, or getting her to come to him. He spares neither fair words, wheedling tricks, or shy devices, to lure her within reach of his paws; but neither fawning nor stratagem succeed. Now, more than ever, she resists his advances, and contrives to elude his contact. The former curiosity which had mingled with her disgust at this idiot boy, exciting her to observe his uncouth ways, yielded entirely to the loathing she felt for him; and she now dreaded and avoided him as sedulously as she had once watched him.

Upon one occasion, however, her vigilance in preventing his coming near her, was frustrated. He was close upon her before she was aware. She had been wandering out towards the wood,—it was winter now, and the frost hung its glittering fretwork upon bush and briar,—she had been thinking how cheerless and desolate all seemed, in despite of the brilliancy of the white tracings around, since her companion Jutha was lost to her, and could never more come thither, to share her admiration of winter frost, spring buds, the rich luxuriance of summer leaves and blossoms, or the mellow hues of autumn; she had been pondering upon the mystery of her friend's change of spirits, her sadness, her illness, her death; and then, as there were no flowers to be found in that sullen season, she gathered a branch of wild-rose, which bore its winter fruitage of scarlet haws in bright profusion, that she might place upon Jutha's grave the best semblance that might be of a tributary garland.

The child repaired with her offering, to the quiet nook, where she knew her friend was laid; and there, tired with her walk, oppressed with sad thoughts, and numbed into lethargy by the cold, she threw herself upon the low mound, and slept. Not many minutes after, she was perceived lying there, by Ulf, who crept stealthily towards her.

"It's little court-lady! And fast asleep!" he muttered, with a grin. "No airs now! The bear shan't be balked of his hug, this time!"

He leaned down over her. The hot breath reached her face; like the rank fumes of a charcoal-furnace, it seemed to stifle her with its tainted oppression. She struggled and woke, to find that loathly visage

hanging just above hers. Instinctively, to ward off its fearful approach, she clutched at the nearest thing at hand. It was the branch of wild-rose, which, beside its scarlet berries, was thickly studded with thorns; and this she thrust with all her force against the impending face. The sharp appeal was effectual. The lout drew back, smarting and bleeding.

"The rose is prickly as well as pretty!" he said, with a leer of idiot slyness; "but we'll see if we can't pluck away its thorns, and smell its sweetness, in spite of 'em."

But in raising his hand to free himself from the obnoxious branch, which had rendered her such good service, Ulf gave the child an opportunity of slipping from his grasp. She was not slow to avail herself of the advantage; but dexterously pulling her skirts from beneath his knee, which in his rude eagerness he had set fast upon them, she succeeded in raising herself away from him, scrambling to her feet, and setting off to run at her utmost speed. It would have availed her but little, had he pursued her: but it happened that she had not gone many paces, before she was joined by Botilda, who had come out to look for her; and Ulf, at sight of his mother, slunk away, like a cur that fears detection.

That night, Ophelia lay awake,——a prey to fancies and terrors that would not let her close her eyes. Botilda, after sharing her bed for many nights, thinking that the child had by this time recovered the late shock had left her, to return to her own room, after seeing her softly drop off into her first sleep. But from this, the little girl had suddenly started, broad awake, trembling and agitated, with a frightful dream she had been dreaming; of digging down into Jutha's grave, with a mad desire to look upon her face once more,—of finding it, only to see it change into that of Ulf; who, raising himself from the coffin, groped among the mould, and drew forth a little baby's white arm, which he fell to scratching and marring with briars. The horror of the sight awoke her; she struggled into a sitting posture, stared through the dim space, and found herself alone in that dreary room. She could just distinguish the blank square spot where the window was. There was deep snow upon the ground—which cast a sickly glare, the moon partially shining from amid haze and clouds. The familiar objects in the room looked shadowy and

spectral in that uncertain light; and the child could get no assurance, or steadying of her thoughts, from looking upon them. At length it seemed to her, that among them,—there—yonder—at the farther end of the room, she saw something move. It was dark, and stole along without noise; shapeless, indistinct, scarce seen, but horribly present. She shuddered; and shrank beneath the bed-clothes. Her heart beat violently, and her head throbbed,—so loud that she could have counted the thumps of each. She had a confused notion of trying to do this, amid the distraction of hearing her teeth keep a bewildering counter-current of strokes, in a rapid timing of their own. Presently, she clenched them firmly, that she might listen to something that caught her ear beside the tumult of her own pulses. She thought she heard a muffled sound, as if something swept against the coverlet of her bed. In desperation, she held her breath, to listen the more acutely, for what she so much dreaded to hear. Yes,—again the sound, as of something softly drawn along the side of the coverlet, was repeated; and this time she felt the bed-clothes brushed by the passing substance. She would have shrieked aloud; but her parched throat refused to give utterance to the cry of terror that choked her. Could it be an animal? Was it anything alive? Or were there indeed wandering shapes of evil permitted to visit the earth in night and darkness, as wild tales hinted? The child's dismay hurriedly pointed to such questions; but on a sudden, her attention was attracted to quite a different source. There was a noise of trampling feet in the snow outside; a sound of many voices; a loud knocking at the door of the cottage: and upon her finding courage to look from beneath the bed-clothes, she could see the light of torches flashing and gleaming through the window. Then there came a stir in the house; a hurry below; hasty steps ascended the stairs; and in another moment the door of her room was flung open, and in the midst of the stream of light that poured in, a figure appeared, which rushed forward to the bed where she lay, exclaiming, "My child! my dear, dear child! My little Ophelia!"

"Mamma!" was the instinctive reply, as the child felt herself gathered into the soft security of a mother's bosom.

In the confusion, no one had remarked the cowering form of Ulf; who darted from a lurking place by the bedside, and made his way out through the open door, just as the others passed into the room. It was he, who, in his brutish pertinacity of desire to obtain the hug he promised himself, had alarmed the child by prowling stealthily about her chamber in the dark. But now, no more fear, no more harm, she was surely, happily sheltered.

The lady Aoudra could not sufficiently feast her eyes upon her daughter's face; again she scanned every feature, noted every particular of look and expression,—sought eagerly each mark of remembered appearance, and traced each vestige of growth and alteration. As she gazed, she became aware of the burning spot that glowed and deepened in the young cheek, the too bright sparkle of the eyes, the unnatural restlessness of the lips, which at length wore an almost vacant smile, while the fingers idly played among the long curls of her mother's hair, drooping over her. In alarm, the lady caught her child's hand in her's; it was feverishly hot.

"I have been culpably unheedful—inconsiderate; I shall have only my own rash selfishness to blame, should the surprise have been too much for my darling. Yet who would have expected such sensitiveness—such susceptibility in one so young? Dear child! Mother's own treasure! Mother's little tender one!"

Fondly, gently, she set about repairing the mischief she feared she had done. She shaded the light away from the too eager eyes; she coaxed them to close,—to cease to look upon her, by clasping one of the hands in hers, that the child might know she was still there; she lay down beside her, parting the hair back upon the heated forehead, giving her from time to time cooling drinks, and suggesting none but peaceful happy thoughts, in the low soft talking she murmured the while in her ear. Lulled thus, the child fell into slumber; but for some hours it was a disturbed, uneasy one, giving the lady many a pang of dread and self-reproach. Violent startings, abrupt twitching of the limbs, talking in her sleep, muttered ends of songs and mournful tunes alternately alarmed the watcher. Once, the little girl sprang suddenly up, trembling, and

looking about her with a sacred eagerness of expectation, clinging convulsively to the arm stretched to receive her; but when she felt herself enfolded within a mother's embrace, when she found herself safe nestling against a mother's heart, cherished by a mother's affection, guarded by a mother's care, she yielded tranquilly, blissfully, to a sense of perfect repose. Lapped in that balmy atmosphere of maternity, she sank into profound rest.

Holy mother-love! nearest semblance vouchsafed to mortals of Divine protection! Benignest human symbol of God's mercy to man! There is a blessed influence, a sacred joy, a plenitude of satisfaction, in the very presence of a mother, that plainer speaks the mysterious beatitude of Heaven itself to earthly intelligence, than aught else in existence.

The little Ophelia awoke next morning from her healing sleep, revived; and quite herself. She was so free from the feverish symptoms which had so much alarmed her mother, overnight, that Aoudra thought she might venture to remove her at once to their home at Elsinore.

The complete change proved the most beneficial thing that could have been devised. In the new scene to which she was introduced, the child acquired unwonted spirits. She gained more of the carelessness befitting her age; she lost that look of uneasiness, and irresolution, which had struck her mother so painfully at first; she seemed no longer oppressed by a vague solicitude and dread which had appeared to haunt her, and hang its weight on her spirits. The only time there was any trace in her of a recurrence to such impressions, was when there happened to be allusion made to her past existence. She appeared averse from speaking, or even thinking, of the period she had spent at the cottage. She never reverted to it of her own accord; never mentioned any of the names of her former associates, or recalled any circumstance that occurred among them; and her mother, perceiving how distasteful the subject was, took care never to revive it in her child's mind. It was avoided altogether; the lady Aoudra only regretting that she had ever been compelled to leave her little one in what had evidently been so uncongenial a home.

Her chief care was now to surround her child with none but pleasant, healthful influences, of person, scene, and circumstance. She kept her

as much as possible in her own society, and in that of her father,—the lord Polonius,—whenever his court duties permitted him to be at home. Her young son, Laertes, was with them, for a period, until the time should arrive for his going to the university. Meantime, masters were engaged: and the children pursued their studies together: though the lady Aoudra chiefly superintended those of her little girl herself. She appointed the one of her own women to whom Ophelia seemed to have taken the greatest fancy, to the child's particular attendant. Guda was a lively, good-tempered girl; and her cheerful companionship was one of the wholesome accessories by which the mother hoped to effect a removal of any sinister impression that might remain upon her child's spirits of bygone discomforts.

The affection that now had full opportunity of taking its natural growth between father and child, contributed greatly to the happiness of Ophelia's new existence. Polonius became dotingly fond of his little girl; and she in turn reverenced him with all duteous affection. She would watch for his home-coming: soon getting to know the hours of his return from attendance at the palace: and then she would set his easy chair, and bring his slippers, and the furred gown, for which he exchanged his court robes, when indulging in domestic ease: and then he would pat her cheek, or pass his hand over her fair young head, and say some fondling words of rejoicing that he now possessed so pretty a living toy at home as his little daughter, to beguile his leisure hours.

He was a good-natured man, of a kindly disposition, with much original shrewdness, and a great deal of acquired worldly knowledge. He was an odd compound of natural familiarity, and assumed dignity: of affability and importance; of condescension and dictatorialness; of garrulous ease and ostentation. He was often jocular, and would twinkle his half merry, half astute eyes, rubbing his hands with a chuckling air of enjoyment, as if he had not a thought beyond the relish of the immediate jest; but, some time after, as if willing to show that it was the mere momentary unbending of the great statesman, he would knit his brow, lean back in his chair, with his hand supporting his chin, and look meditative. He used a pompous enunciation for the most part; but

occasionally, his opiniated eagerness would run away with him—hurry him into forgetfulness of the main thread of his subject, until he was brought suddenly to a check—a pause, from which he sought hasty refuge in the resumption of his didactic style.

He was fond of parcelling out his speech into formal divisions; of putting forth his opinions in set phrases; he was full of precept; sententious in speech; and uttered his axioms in an authoritative voice. He spoke preceptively. He would talk to his wife in manner of an oration; clearing his voice, and pausing a little, as if to bespeak full attention ere he began. He liked to see those around him performing audience to his dicta. He would address the guests at his table, as if they were a committee, or a board of council; and harangue, rather than converse. He prided himself on great foresight and perspicacity.

He ordinarily prefaced with a hem; and emphasized, as he went on, with one hand in the palm of the other, or by reckoning off each clause, successively, on his fingers. He collected attention by canvassing glances; gathered it in by sharp espial upon those in whom he perceived symptoms of its straying; and kept it from wandering by a short admonitory cough. He was accustomed to ask, in a triumphant tone, when any prediction of his was ever known to fail in being verified by the event. He affected diplomacy and expediency in action; mystery in expression; craft in device. He had a habit of laying artful schemes in conversation, for entrapping those about him into betrayals of characteristics such as he had ascribed to them—and then would exult in the proofs of his accurate judgment. "You see! What did I say?" He piqued himself on ingenuity in compassing his ends; and, in their accomplishment, preferred contrivance and cunning to the commonplace means of straightforward procedure.

Policy was his rule of action; statesmanship his glory of ambition. He would complain of the fatigues of office; of the onerous demands of a court life; of the cares of government; but secretly, official dignities, a courtier's existence, and ministerial power, formed the sum of his desires.

His wife, the lady Aoudra, understood his character well; but both

her affection for the good qualities he possessed, and her conjugal duty taught her to acquiesce in his peculiarities, forbearing to show any unmeet consciousness of them. She would gravely listen, when he told her of some deep-laid plot he had, for bringing about what she, in her singleness of mind, thought might have been effected by much simpler means; she heard in silence, yet with attentive sympathy, his plans of ambition, his projects for advancement; and she took active interest in his schemes for the national welfare, even when she felt them to be more subtly devized, than practically applicable.

But she could not forbear smiling—though to herself only—when she saw him carry this system of policy into his domestic sway. When she saw him exercise his authority as husband, father, and master, by a sort of trick; when she found him securing her wifely obedience,—that obedience which would have been spontaneously yielded, without inducement,—by management and winning artifices; when she found him governing his children, ruling his household, regulating his affairs, nay ordering his servants by a calculated method of stratagem, she could do no other than smile. Beyond all else that provoked her smile, was to see how the innocence of childhood—the unconscious simplicity of his young son and daughter set at naught the diplomatist's skill,—frustrated and rendered null his intrigues by an ingenuous look or word.

Instead of openly forbidding or reprehending certain deeds, he would lay snares for discovering whether they had been committed; and while the process was going on, his penetration was baffled, by the artless behavior of the children. His guile was futile against their candor; and was more frequently proved at fault than they. His sagacity was always aiming at detection, where no delinquency existed; ever bent on discovering some concealment, where there was nothing to conceal. It was almost comic to see the searching frown he would bend on one of those clear, open countenances held up to him in confident unreserve, conscious of no shadow of blame. The questioning eye, the shrewd glance, the artfully put enquiry, seemed absurd, directed against such transparent honesty.

In consequence of this system of their father's, his praise was some

times as mysterious and unexpected to the young Laertes and Ophelia as his reproof.

On one occasion, he called them to him and commended them highly. for never having been into a certain gallery which he had built out into his garden for the reception of some pictures, bequeathed to him by a French nobleman—a friend of his—lately dead.

Seeing a look of surprise on their faces, he added :—"Ah, you marvel how I came to know so certainly that you never went in. But I have methods deep and sure,—a little bird, or my little finger,—in few, you need not assure me, that you never entered that gallery; for I happen to be aware, beyond a doubt that you never did. And I applaud your discretion."

"But we did go in;" said Ophelia.

"What, child? Pooh, impossible! Come to me; look me full in the face." Not that she looked down, or aside, or anything but straight at him; but he always used this phrase conventionally, when he conducted an examination. "I tell you, you never went into that gallery; I know it for a fact. There's no use in attempting to deceive your father. I should have discovered it, had you gone into that room without my permission."

"But did you not wish us to go there? I never knew you forbade it?" said Laertes. "If we had known you had any objection, neither Ophelia nor I would have———"

"I never forbade it certainly," interrupted his father; "but I had strong reasons for wishing that you should not go into the room till the pictures were hung. You might have injured them. No, no; I knew better than to let heedless children play there; so I took means to prevent your entering the gallery without my knowledge."

"But we did play there, every day, father;" said Laertes.

"Yes;" said Ophelia.

"And I tell you, impossible! Listen to me; I fastened a hair across the entrance. The invisible barrier is yet unbroken. So that you see, you could not have passed through that door without my knowledge."

"But we didn't go through the door, papa; we got in at the window!"

exclaimed both the children. We didn't know you wished us not to play there; so, finding a space which the builders had left, in one of the windows that look into the garden, we used to creep in there, and amuse ourselves with looking at the new pictures. We did no harm; only admired."

Time went on. Laertes now a tall stripling, was sent to Paris,—then famous as a seat of learning. The motives which swayed Polonius in the choice of the university to which he decided upon sending his son, were characteristic. He owned to his wife, that he should have preferred sending the youth to Wittenberg, where the king's son was a student; such an opportunity for intimacy with the prince being a great temptation; but there was a certain personage, highly influential with the court of France, who had exacted a promise from him that Laertes should be educated at the university of Paris; and as it was of the utmost importance that the friendly relations with France which he had established during the period of his embassage there, should be carefully maintained, he resolved that nothing should interfere with his son's being placed at college in that country.

Ophelia grew into delicate girlhood. Ever quiet,—ever diffident, in her retiring gentleness and modesty; but serene, and happy. A tranquil-spirited maiden, unexacting, even-tempered, affectionate; one of those, upon whom the eyes and hearts of all near, dwell with a feeling of repose.

Her father now began to look forward to his long-cherished hope of introducing her at court; where he beheld her already attracting his sovereign's gracious notice, and winning the favour of the Queen. He imparted his views to his wife; adding, that all Ophelia wanted, was a little forming in manner, to render her presentable; and to that end he intended cultivating for her the acquaintance of a young lady, daughter to a friend of his, the lord Cornelius.

Aoudra ventured the pardonable motherly remark, that their young Ophelia was perfectly well-bred; a gentlewoman in every particular.

"An air of nobility distinguishes her mien; and the look of unruffled content in the blue depths of those violet eyes, revealing the sweet placidity of her nature, gives a crowning grace of self-possession and ease, that might become a princess. If a court atmosphere, if the royal presence be our child's destiny, she seems fitted for them by nature.

"Ay, ay, by nature. But art may do somewhat. Art may do much. Polish, refinement; a conventional breeding in manner; an air of the world;—are attained only by associating with those accustomed to move in courtly circles. The lady Thyra, daughter to my friend Cornelius, having lost her mother when quite a child, has been early habituated to receive guests, to preside over her father's establishment,—in few, to enact betimes the centre of a distinguishable circle. To promote a friendship between this young lady and our daughter will be to place Ophelia beneath fittest tutelage—in the very school to form her for the future station she will fill."

"Is this young lady Thyra,—unrestricted in her proceedings, choosing her own associates, complete mistress of her conduct and herself,—quite the best associate, think you, my lord, for our daughter? May there not be risk as well as advantage in the companionship?"

"What but advantage can there be, good my lady? The lord Cornelius enjoys the royal confidence. He will rise to highest honors in the state. I foresee,—trust this brain of mine,—I foresee, I say, that when an envoy to Norway shall be needed, he will—but no matter. Where was I? oh—His wealth is ample; and he allows his daughter well-nigh unlimited command of his means and fortune. What more would you have?"

"No more; nay, not so much. Her power, her position I doubt not; 'tis herself I mean. Is she——"

"Tut, tut, lady mine;" interrupted Aoudra's husband, with a wave of the hand, which she well knew to be of final significancy. "She is in all respects what I could best wish for my girl's friend. The lord Cornelius is as anxious as myself for the improvement of the acquaintance; and it is my will that henceforth the families shall be intimate. Let it be looked to."

"My coach shall be ordered forthwith, my lord; I will wait upon the young lady with our daughter without delay, since such is your wish;" said the lady-wife duteously; adding to herself "I will hope that it is no more than a mother's anxiety which makes me see a groundless fear in this friendship. The lady Thyra may be all that I could desire, in heart and mind, for my Ophelia's associate. At all events, I shall now see her myself, and judge."

As far as judgment could be formed in a first visit, all that Aoudra saw of Cornelius's daughter that morning led her to rejoice that so pleasant an intimacy as this promised to be, should have been begun. The young lady was evidently the petted child of a fond father, who knew not how to refuse her anything. But this indulgence did not seem to have spoiled her—and that alone, spoke greatly in favor of her natural disposition. She was neither imperious, nor wilful; there was none of the insolence in manner, or impatience of controul, which might have been generated by such a course as hers, of irresponsible self-government. She received the lady Aoudra with much gentle grace; and with a tone of respect in her welcome, which showed, that having been so long her own mistress had not destroyed that deference which youth owes to superiority of age and experience. She was sprightly, without hardness; she was easy, without forwardness; she was self-possessed, without a spark of self-conceit in her demeanour. There was a tone of good-breeding in her every word and gesture, which showed that she was accustomed to much society; but there was that in her manner which bespoke goodness of heart as well as courtesy of tongue; there was an unrestrained freedom in her mode of speech which told plainly how habituated she was to the expression of her opinions and feelings before numbers, but there was something also that revealed how little need there was for reserve in any of her thoughts or sentiments. She was obviously kind-natured, as well as complaisant; affectionate as well as affable; amiable as well as polite.

As for Ophelia, she was charmed with her; and the young lady Thyra, seemed no less won by the modest sweetness of Aoudra's daughter. A mutual and strong attraction at once subsisted between

the two girls; and after their first introduction to each other, they became as rapidly and completely intimate, as the fathers could have desired.

Soon, no morning was spent apart; and Thyra, intent upon enjoying her new friend's society uninterruptedly, made a point of receiving Ophelia alone, and of appointing her usual visitors in the evening only, henceforward. She could assume a pretty tyranny—a kind of playful despotism, when she chose. It sat well on her; and her friends submitted to it,—well-pleased.—as only another grace, in the graceful Thyra. There was so much of feminine elegance in what she did and said, that it seemed her natural prerogative to have all yield to her. She was not wilful; but she liked to have her own way; and it was so pleasantly asserted, so inoffensively insisted on, that no one dreamed of denying it her. She was so winning while she dictated, so obliging in the midst of her exactions, so really thoughtful of the feelings of others while she affected to be thinking only of her own, so truly kind, while so pretendedly selfish, that all loved to obey her behests; and indeed, it was generally found, in the end, that they were prompted by a consideration for the general pleasure, as well as for hers in particular.

"You know, sweet friend, we could not find the way to each other's hearts, were we to meet in a crowd every day, instead of thus familiarly, unrestrainedly, doing and saying exactly what we please, while together. As we do now; do we not?" said she to Ophelia, as they sat together, in Thyra's pleasant room—her own peculiar room, which was fitted up with every graceful luxury a young girl's taste could suggest in its adornment, and looking out as it did upon the gardens by which her father's mansion was surrounded,—its windows shadowed with trees and flowering climbers, it was in all respects the ideal of a lady's bower. "Besides, I mean you to know something of the people you will meet, before you come among them, since you have owned to me, with that charming simplicity and frankness of yours, that you feel some awe at the thought of encountering strangers."

"I have so little seen of strange faces;" said Ophelia. "My father's guests are chiefly men high in office, counsellors of state, grave and dig-

nified personages; and my dear mother, thinking one so young could not as yet derive advantage from their conversation, allowed me to keep our own apartments, when there were visitors."

"You shall hear all about mine, ere you are introduced; and then they will be no strangers to you when you see them. You will be acquainted with them beforehand; and it's a great advantage, let me tell you, to have this key,—knowledge of the character,—previously to looking upon the face. Those, who have none of your novice modesty, would often be fain to get possession of such a treasure as this same key."

"Is it quite fair that I should have the advantage you speak of, Thyra?"

"Never fear, thou dear scrupulous novice! Those very people, could they know that their characters have been discussed, would be the best pleased. So that we are but thought of, talked of, our self-esteem is satisfied. To be unnoticed—to be of such insignificance, as to be left uncriticised, that is the sting most difficult for human pride to endure."

"Then pray indulge them and me by some of your strictures;" said Ophelia, smiling. "Let us hear what biting things your amount of malice can allow itself to utter. And yet your lip slanders itself if it be a slanderer of others."

"Nay, no slander; truth, nothing but truth. Come, with whom shall I begin? Methinks I'll commence at once with the highest—and so get the most dangerous part of my task despatched first. Our sovereign and his queen have honored my father's house with their presence, but I may not, of course, count their majesties among my visitors; the king's brother, however, lord Claudius, is not an unfrequent guest here, and he——"

"You have been presented to their majesties? You know the king's person—the queen's; tell me somewhat of them."

"The king is a grave-looking man; warlike and noble in his bearing; full of dignity and command; and looks,—as he indeed is—the accomplished soldier and ruler. The queen is very beautiful, both in face and person. Graciously condescending in the kind notice and en-

couragement she accorded to myself—a young girl undergoing her first presentation."

"And what of the prince, their son, lord Hamlet? I have heard my father speak of him as a student of great repute; he says, that he has won high academic honors; and that if he were not of royal birth, he could make himself illustrious, as a man of learning."

"Nay, he's even too much of the scholar, for my taste;" said the lively Thyra. "He has dark reflective eyes, which would be beautiful, but that he allows them to become absorbed in musing and speculation, instead of letting them discourse agreeable things. He has a handsome mouth, which he resigns to a meditative idleness, when he might give it its natural action in pleasant converse. He is thoughtful, when he should be amusing; he is absent, when I want him to be attending to what I say, or to be inventing something to say to me. All this is owing to his studious habit, which moreover, will, if he don't take care, spoil his figure—for he's inclined to fat; and a fat gentleman, thou know'st, even though he be a prince, can never form a lady's ideal of a man."

"What sort of man must he be, to embody Thyra's idea of manly perfection?" said her young friend.

"Nay, I cannot tell, not I," replied Thyra, with a momentary embarrassment; then recovering herself, she went on: "Not such a man as my lord Claudius, assuredly. He comes next to tell thee of. There's something marvellously unattractive to me, about that lord. Though he be of blood-royal, he looks not noble; and though his lineage be high, he hath naught lofty in his mien. And yet I cannot tell what ails me, that I should not approve him. He is full of suavity, and is assiduous in his courtesies and attentions; but they are too much on demand, to seem very spontaneous. You shall catch him gnawing the hilt of his dagger in moody silence, and the next instant shall see him all smiles and ready adulation. His face changes too voluntary-sudden for sincerity. He'll shift you his manner from sad-browed to jesting, from abstracted to attentive, at a moment's bidding. I never feel at ease in his company; and care not if he never came here again; but

my father considers the visits of the king's brother an honor to our house, and so I receive him with as good a grace as I can muster."

"Thyra, like a good daughter, makes her own inclinings bend to those of her father;" said Ophelia.

"You give me too much credit for filial submission, I fear;" returned she, with a slight blush and a laugh. "My father has hitherto given such free course to my likings, that I can scarcely think he would wish me to fashion them by his. And yet, I know not——" She paused, then resumed:

"There is the lord Voltimand; but he is my father's friend, not mine. His forty-odd years, and his wise head, claim affinity with sager maturity than I can boast. He is no associate for my giddy self. Then there are Marcellus and Bernardo, two young officers of the king's guard; true soldiers, light-hearted, pleasant, rattle-pates; with more valour than knowledge, more animal spirits than mental acquirement; but withal very agreeable companions—and their uniforms are a great help to make my saloon look bright and gay."

"You tell me chiefly of your gentlemen guests; have you no ladies among your visitors, dear Thyra?"

"Ay, truly, there's no lack of ladies to make our parties complete;" said Thyra. "But one court-lady is so like another court-lady, that as I was giving you an insight into the character of the people you will meet, I naturally left out those who seldom can boast of much distinctive feature in that kind. But I am waxing impertinent, methinks. There are, in good sadness, some sweet women among our lady-friends, but thou wilt find those out for thyself. They are not among the formidable strangers I had to tell thee of. Let me see; who else? O, ay, there are Osric of Stolzberg, and Eric of Kronstein, two lords, whose estates adjoin that of my father; you will often meet them here."

"Are they of the formidable class I may expect to see?" asked Ophelia.

"Truly, I know not why I classed them together; for they differ in every particular, save in being provincial neighbors of ours. When we are in the country they are our constant guests. But the one is a youth, the other a man: the one is bovish, the other manly; the one has ma

ture ideas; the other, no ideas at all. The young lord of Stolzberg is a coxcomb; while the lord of Kronstein is—is—well, perhaps something very near the ideal we spoke of, ere now."

Thyra paused a moment, with a little conscious laugh; while she stole a glance at Ophelia's face; but she saw it looking so quiet, so girl-like innocent, that she went on:—

"Perhaps it is from the contrast between these two lords, that the one appears to me so greatly above the other. It is not every one who finds Kronstein so gifted, or Stolzberg so inane. One great advantage in public esteem, the latter possesses over the former; which is, that his domains are extensive, his land unencumbered, his possessions exclusively within his own power; while the other lord has a magnificence of taste which has led to rather a profuse expenditure, and it is whispered that his estates are deeply mortgaged. This report has blunted worldly judgment, and dulled the edge of its discrimination, in awarding the palm of merit between the two. General opinion lackeys the rich lordling, and can scarcely allow the personal desert of the accomplished, but acre-dipped Kronstein. Certain it is, that my father and I differ widely in our estimate of their respective attractions. He favours the one while I———"

"While you judge the lord of Kronstein to be the superior man, however he may be the poorer lord;" said Ophelia, simply; filling up the pause in her friend's speech.

"Yes, dear novice;" rejoined Thyra, with another smile and shy glance at the quiet unconscious face. "I must call thee novice, dear Ophelia, thou seem'st to me so nun-like new to all worldly thoughts and ideas. Thou art a very child still, I do believe, though that grave face, and sedate air of thine, make thee seem a woman. I'll wager now, thou hast scarce obtained the dignity of teens?"

"You guess my age accurately, dear Thyra; I have scarce seen years enough to give me a claim to equality of friendship with you, who must be well-nigh half a dozen summers riper in wisdom than I; but I can make up in loving respect for thee, what I lack in befitting qualities to give me claim upon thy liking."

"We will love and confide in each other entirely, as friends should;

and be of all the greater mutual benefit, for what there is dissimilar between us;" said Thyra. "My social experience shall help you in learning to face strangers; and thy novice candour shall teach me the beauty of unworldliness. Let me commence the lessons I am to give, by initiating you in the mysteries of chess.—now the most fashionable of games"

"Is it so much played? I knew you were fond of it, for I see the board stand ever ready;—but I knew not it was in general favour."

"Yes. For some time, it was banished from court, after that fatal game, famous in our Danish chronicles, when the sovereign dynasty was changed by a choleric blow with a chess-board; but of late, the taste has revived; and the game is pursued with greater zest than ever. We have some skilful players amongst us. The lord of Kronstein is masterful at it. He was my instructor. When we were last at my father's country seat of Rosenheim, we played together daily."

"Then you are, doubtless, now, a well-skilled player yourself, dear Thyra. I fear you will find me an unhopeful scholar;" said Ophelia.

"You are ingenuous, you are artless, you are unsuspicious, dear girl;" said Thyra, looking at her earnestly, with affectionate admiration; "and those seem unpromising qualities for attaining proficiency in a game where stratagem and contrivance are main requisites; but vigilance, patience, are also wanted; and these you have, for certain. Your noticing that my chess-board is always at hand, bespeaks an observant eye; and watchfulness may secure success, when over-eager craft rushes into the jaws of an unespied check-mate. But come; let us begin."

At this moment, an attendant entered. "I can see no visitors today;" Thyra said impatiently, as she ranged the pieces on the board, signing to the servant to withdraw. "See that I am denied to every one; and say that I receive, this evening."

"I stated such to be your ladyship's orders;" said the attendant; "but my lord would take no refusal: he bade me carry up his name, and beseech that your ladyship would see him, for that he hath news which ———"

"Then why dost not announce his name, sirrah?" interrupted the young lady. "Who is it?"

"The lord Eric of Kronstein, madam;" was the reply.

The colour flushed into Thyra's face; but she said in a composed voice—that composure and command of voice which courtly breeding teaches, "Give entrance to my lord of Kronstein; he doubtless brings inteligence from Rosenheim—from my father." Then, as the servant quitted the room, she added:—"I make an exception in this visitor's favour, dear Ophelia, because I think thou wilt feel curiosity to see one of whom we have been speaking so much."

"Your report was too favourable not to induce a wish to know him;" replied she; "I shall be glad——"

"He is here!" said Thyra. Her manner showed so much agitation, so involuntary a delight, such blushing joy, that it could not have failed betraying her secret to one more versed in such tell-tale symptoms than her young companion. But Ophelia perceived in it only the pleasure and animation with which a friend preferred to others for his estimable qualities, would naturally be welcomed.

Besides, her attention was principally engaged by the new comer. Not only did the description she had recently heard, cause her to look at him with interest, but there was something in his appearance which struck her with a singular impression, as of something remembered—something long since seen. She continued to gaze upon the face and figure, as though they were a pictured image of some shadow in her memory. So complete was this effect of his appearance upon her, that she kept her eyes fixed upon him with almost as unreserved a regard as if he had indeed been a portrait, instead of a living man.

For him, he was too much engrossed by the greetings that took place between himself and Thyra, to perceive the attention with which the young lady stranger was looking at him.

Presently however, her friend, recollecting her duty as hostess, performed the ceremony of introduction. He bowed courteously; and was about to resume his conversation, when something in the cursory glance he had bestowed upon Ophelia, seemed to strike him, also, with a vague sense of recollection. He hesitated; looked at her; but seeming to obtain no confirmation of his passing fancy from what he saw, upon this

second view of the tall slight figure before him, he went on with what he was saying to the lady Thyra.

He asked after all their mutual town acquaintance: told her how dull Rosenheim had appeared after she had left it for Elsinore: but said that he had made a point of paying his duty there regularly to the lord Cornelius, who had charged him with loving messages for his daughter, on hearing that he was about to ride to the metropolis.

"My lord, your father, desired me to say that he trusts many days will not elapse ere he joins you here in Elsinore: but meantime, as I am returning to Rosenheim, he bade me ask you for a packet of papers, which——"

"You return to Rosenheim, my lord? When? How soon?" was Thyra's hurried enquiry.

"Immediately—I am compelled—indeed, I must—my presence, just now, is indispensable at my own poor place:" he said, in reply to the mute reproach conveyed by her eyes, and by the tone of her voice: "but it will not be so, for any time: the estate ere long, reverts incontestably to——"

He paused in the low-toned but eager explanation he was pouring forth: but Thyra seemed satisfied with these few broken words; for adverting to the packet he had mentioned, she said:—"But these papers my father requires, my lord: did he say where they were to be found?"

"He bade me tell you, you would find them in the ebon cabinet, by his study-chair, lady: this sealed packet, with which he charged me for you, contains the key, together with more precise directions for your guidance."

"I will seek them at once, my lord, since your return must needs be immediate. But remember," she added, with a resumption of vivacity: "your friends in Elsinore will look eagerly for your coming soon among them again. Your stay at Rosenheim must be brief as may be."

"My own wishes will limit its duration to the shortest possible span, believe me, lady. They abide in Elsinore, even while necessity chains myself elsewhere."

His eyes followed her, as she withdrew to fetch the packet; and

when she disappeared, he turned, in an abstracted manner, to the table on which the chess-board stood; and played mechanically with one of the pieces, twirling it round and round upon its circular foot. Suddenly he seemed to remember that he was not alone, and that he owed some courtesy of attention to the young lady who sat there so silent, and so still. He was about to address her with some slight remark, when, upon raising his eyes towards her, he found hers fixed upon his face.

Her look was so steadfast that it perplexed the gentleman, man of the world as he was. He took up the chess-man, and idled with it against his lip, in embarrassment of which he himself hardly understood the source.

A slight incident will sometimes prompt a struggling memory, while vainly striving to help itself by recalling more important clues. The form of the ivory piece caught Ophelia's eye; and suddenly she exclaimed, "The knight! The white horse! I remember, the wood—lord Eric—ay, that was the name. I recollect it now. It was you, then, who——"

"Hush! Can it be possible?" was the hasty exclamation, as he looked round to see that no one was near. "'Sdeath!" he muttered; "the unopened rosebud, by all that's strange! How came she here? How came she to be there?"

"You never returned, after Jutha became so altered—so ill? You never knew that she died?"

The lip blanched to well-nigh the whiteness of the chess-man that had lately touched it.

"I knew you would be sorry for her, when you came to hear of it. You were kind to her; you liked her. Poor Jutha!"

"Be silent, I conjure you, young lady. Do not speak that name again—it can do no good—it may do fearful harm. Mischief—misery—more evil than you can conceive, or could ever repair."

He looked round again, in great agitation and anxiety. "Do not name her here, I entreat, I implore——"

His manner, so earnest in its hurried supplication, had its effect upon Ophelia. But she answered in her own quiet way, "I have never men-

tioned her; she is unknown here. She had almost faded from my own thought, as had your face and person. I hardly remembered you. I was a little child then; at nurse, in that remote country place."

Her ingenuous look, her simple unconsciousness, as she spoke, plainly told the man of the world that this innocent girl had no suspicion of the share he had had in the unhappy Jutha's fate. His dark secret was safe, could he but hope that she would never revive his victim's name; never repeat the tale of his forest-visits, to others more clear-sighted, more experienced, than herself.

He summoned all his address to his aid. He told Ophelia how she herself had grown out of his knowledge; that he should not have recognized the little rustic she then appeared, in the beautiful maiden—the young lady of noble birth and distinguished air, whom he at present beheld. He added some flattering allusion to her family; said that her father, the lord Polonius, was known to him by reputation, as a statesman whose services were of the highest value to his country; and concluded by adroitly making it his request that she would never allude to any circumstances of their former meeting, as it was important to him, for reasons which he could not immediately explain, that he should not appear to be already known to her.

Before Ophelia could well signify her acquiescence with his wish, Thyra reappeared

Eric of Kronstein tarried not long after he had received the packet from her hands. Promising to deliver it faithfully and speedily, he took a graceful leave of the two young ladies, and withdrew.

They both remained silent for a considerable space; each occupied with her own thoughts. Then, Thyra, rousing herself from her reverie, said, "Forgive me, sweet friend, that I am such dull company—so ill fulfil my part of your hostess and entertainer. Come; now for our first study of chess."

The quiet chess-mornings, the brilliant social evenings, enjoyed with Thyra, made Ophelia's time speed pleasantly away; while she could not but observe, that at all seasons, at all hours, Eric of Kronstein was ever the favorite guest of her friend. When others were excluded, he was

admitted; before others arrived, he was already there; and after others had retired, he lingered; and always, his advent and his stay were welcome. By his adroit management, this was not markedly apparent to the world; but to one in such close companionship as Ophelia, it could not escape notice.

Once.—it was an evening when there was no assemblage of friends, the young ladies were deep in the absorbing interest of Thyra's favorite game, while the lord of Kronstein stood by, as was his frequent wont, leaning over the back of her chair, watching the lesson she gave, suggesting the best moves on either side, and aiding the fair teacher with his superior knowledge.

It grew late, and the game was not yet ended. Their excitement strengthened with every moment; for in the interest of the trial of skill, Kronstein had insensibly come to prompt Ophelia's moves exclusively, so that, in fact, Thyra and he were now playing against each other. Her cheeks were heated, her eyes sparkled, as a chess-player's will, when the antagonism is at its height.

At this moment the lady Ophelia's coach, with Reynaldo, her father's confidential servant, and Guda, her own woman, to attend her home, were announced as having arrived.

"Can it be so late? I had no thought of the hour. My lord, however unwillingly, you must be inhospitably bidden good-night. We must play out the game to-morrow;" said Thyra.

"We cannot leave it unfinished; sleep would be impossible, with the fate of that game undecided!" exclaimed Eric impetuously. "The lady Ophelia will give orders that the equipage shall wait."

"My mother especially bade me return without delay, when she should send for me this evening;" said Ophelia. "It is my father's intention to take me with him to the palace to-morrow, to present me to their majesties; and he desired that I would be with him to-night, ere he retired to rest, that he might speak some words of counsel he had to impress upon me. I may not tarry. Good night, Thyra. Good night, my lord."

Thyra in returning her leave-taking, evidently expected that the lord

of Kronstein would retire at the same time; but he, declaring that the game of chess must be played out, in order to let Ophelia know its decision, on the morrow, threw himself into the chair she had just quitted, showing that he was resolved to stay.

Thyra in pretty, blushing confusion, partly eagerness and pleasure, partly hesitation, submitted to his arrangement, and reseated herself at the chess-table, bidding her friend be sure to let her see her immediately on her return from her first court-visit.

In one of the large apartments of the palace, on the following day, sat a lady, surrrounded by her attendant ladies, working at a tapestry-frame. In a deep embayed window, at some distance from her, stood a man, leaning just within the recess, regarding her earnestly from beneath his bent brows, and drooping lids. Not a bend of her handsome head, not an inclination of that polished throat, not a sweeping line of those white falling shoulders, not a curve of those voluptuously rounded arms, or a single movement of her ample but finely moulded figure, as it inclined over her work, escaped the eye so greedily noting every particular of her luxuriant beauty. Sensual admiration lurked in the looks with which he stealthily devoured her person, while all the while, his attention was apparently devoted to feeding and playing with a hawk, which sat upon an ornamented perch, in the recessed window where he leaned.

The man, was Claudius, the king's brother. The lady, was queen Gertrude.

The weather had been unusually warm. The soft afternoon air crept in by the open windows; and through the apartment there reigned the silence that grows with a sense of enjoyment and refreshment. It had for some time been preserved unbroken, save by the drawing through of the tapestry stitches, and the occasional restlessness of the hawk, pecking and biting at the teasing finger, when one of the attendant ladies exclaimed: "His majesty, the king; madam."

Gertrude rose to receive her royal husband. He came to tell her of letters that had arrived from Wittenberg; bringing news of fresh academic honors attained by their son, Hamlet; one from himself, containing loving and duteous greetings to his parents, with tidings of his health

and welfare; and other despatches from the royal forces engaged in a northern warfare, which had terminated in conquest to Denmark. The king concluded, by saying that so much happy intelligence arriving on one day, deserved marking by some token of remembrance; and that he had brought one in the shape of a gemmed bracelet, which he prayed her to wear as the gift not only of a proud and happy father, and of a rejoicing monarch, but as that of a loving husband. As the king fondly leant over the beautiful arm presented to him, that he might clasp the jewel upon it, a sharp inward groan burst from the lips of Claudius.

"My brother!" exclaimed the king. "I did not perceive your presence. Are you not well, my Claudius?" he added, approaching the recess where he leaned. "That cry you could not suppress—your change of color—your face is pale, man; you are in pain. I have more than once noted that ashy hue steal upon your face. Tell me, tell your brother, what you ail."

"An old wound, a hurt,—'tis nothing;" he answered, looking down. "Or if," and he turned to the king, with a ghastly attempt to smile off his embarrassment.—"'tis but what reminds me that I have been a soldier, and long for an occasion to efface the old rankle with a few new scratches."

"It has scarred over, ere properly healed. It must be looked to;" said the king.

"It will never heal;" the other muttered, bitterly; writhing, as he withdrew from the hand laid in brotherly kindness on his shoulder.

"Our own leech shall examine it;" the king said, in his gentle but earnest manner. "You must not thus neglect health most dear to us."

"Your grace shall pardon me,—no leechcraft may avail,—'tis beyond the physician's skill,—I have learned to think it cannot be relieved. I will school myself to more patient, more silent, endurance. You shall hear no more such weak betrayals."

"Sweet Gertrude, come hither; use you your womanly persuasion, with this refractory brother of ours, to have his hurt examined. I will not believe it beyond cure."

As the queen advanced in obedience to her royal husband's bidding,

and approached the spot where they stood, the king took her hand, and placing it on his brother's arm, said: "I expect no less from the gentle power of my Gertrude's words, which as her loving husband I am free to confess," he said, as he regarded her with an affectionate smile, "than that I shall find, on my return, they have won our brother to our wish. The summer afternoon wooes me forth, to walk awhile in mine orchard. Meantime, prosper you in your suit, my queen."

He left them standing thus, beside each other; Gertrude's hand, where he had placed it, on his brother's arm. But when the king had left the apartment, she withdrew her hand, and retired a pace or two from her close vicinity to Claudius. He breathed hard, and there was almost a fierceness in the tone with which he uttered the words, "He bade you sue me, madam. Your suit? Your will? What have you to urge? Let me hear you plead. *You* plead to me! But come, what is't?"

"Your wound, my lord. Consent that it shall be looked to; there might be relief——"

He turned abruptly, and looked at her, as he said, "You would have it relieved—cured?"

"Assuredly, my good lord; our leech is renowned in skill. He will, I doubt not——"

Again he interrupted her: "I speak not of the leech. But this old wound of mine—this deep-seated, scorching pain, here; this corroding torture, ever gnawing in and in, till vitality itself is the prey, would you have it relieved, cured—if relief and cure were in your own gift?"

He dropped his voice to a whisper, as he uttered the few last words; though the whole conversation had taken place in a low tone, which could not reach the spot where the attendant ladies sat, round the tapestry frame, at the farther end of the room.

Gertrude said, in a manner as natural and unconcerned as she could make it, "Can you doubt it, my lord?"

Wilful misunderstanding sometimes betrays deepest consciousness

Claudius felt this, as he looked at the varying cheek which belied the assumed composure of manner; and saw that she knew his full meaning

"Then pity me. This wound is probed to the quick, its festering smart is tented past concealment of the anguish I endure, when he makes me the witness of his licensed endearments;" he hurried on, hissing, serpent-like, his torrent of scarce-suppressed passionate words. "Can I calmly see him fondle that arm which I so many times have thirsted to press to these throbbing lips. A 'loving husband,' forsooth! Why, his is a tame affection which can leave a wife, to go sleep in the shade of a cool orchard, while mine is a burning passion that consumes me. Ardor such as mine befits a 'loving husband;' not the puling caresses of that dotard."

"My lord! Remember you of whom you speak? Of your brother, your king, my husband!"

"Ay, madam—your husband—your 'loving husband!'" He ground his teeth, muttering a curse. "The very hem of your garment stirs me to more adoring warmth than he is capable of feeling, from the possession of all that he hath in right of loving-husbandship;" he presumed to add, as he clenched within his hand the end of a light drapery, which formed part of her attire.

"You presume on my forbearance, my lord!" exclaimed the queen. "You cannot believe that I will listen longer to such rash speech." She would have withdrawn from the recessed window; but perceiving that a portion of her robe was within his grasp, she feared lest the movement might attract the attention of her ladies to this circumstance, and so betray to them what was passing. A veriest trifle, such as this, will suffice to sway the conduct of a weak-souled woman.

At this moment, an attendant entered to announce that the lord Polonius and his daughter, the lady Ophelia, craved audience of her majesty.

"Conduct them to the presence-chamber;" said the queen; "I will receive them there."

The edge of robing was still detained for an instant; then she felt it suddenly released, and she was free to go. She moved away from the side of Claudius, without suffering her eyes to look towards him; and, attended by her ladies, she left the apartment.

As she proceeded along a gallery of the palace, on her way to the state-chamber, one of her train of ladies exclaimed, lifting the end of the embroidered drapery which floated from the queen's shoulders;—"See here, madam; some treacherous doorway hath torn away a fragment from your majesty's attire; the piece is fairly wrenched out. Alack! the beauty of the robe is marred!"

"Get other tires ready. I will change these anon, when my lord Polonius shall have taken leave;" said queen Gertrude. "It must needs have been some unheeded violence of a closing door, or other like accident. 'Tis no matter."

"A passing sweet temper hath her majesty, to regard the wreck of such embroidery as that, without so much as a fretful word;" thought the lady-in-waiting.

"And so, you found our queen no less gracious than I had painted her to you;" said Thyra to Ophelia, when next the two friends sat together, to discuss the grand event of court presentation.

"She was, indeed, all that a young creature could desire, of considerate and encouraging; she condescended to make it her express desire, that my father would bring me frequently to the palace in future."

"And while thou hast been basking in the sunshine of royal smiles, and court favor, poor I have been yawning in the vapid atmosphere of foppery and folly, of coxcombry and pretension."

"Ah, I can tell, then, who hath been thy guest this morning, Thyra. Young Osric of Stolzberg; was't not? He hath never thy good word, I know."

"Doth de deserve one? Is he not an insufferable froth? An intolerable bubble of emptiness? He thinks to play the accomplished gentleman by affecting modish phraseology, and adopting fashionable whims of speech See how he minces his mother-tongue, in his mispronouncings. Ler me arrange your la'ship's men for you; the knights, bashops, pones, and so. You shall take none other than the red,—a blushing foil to your la'ship's fingers. Your la'ship advances your king's pone? 'Tis well; the forward varlet suffers capture in a trice, for his presumption."

"In 'a trace! in a trace!'" interrupted Ophelia, laughing at her friends's imitation of the young lordling's manner.

"True; 'in a trace, for his presumption.' This same game of chess your la'ship favors with so much of your la'ship's good laking, is exceeding dainty sport; of ingenious devace,—very subject to contravance,—very suggestive to skill,—a most pleasing pastame, and of very excating encounter. But your la' ship is playing adly. Have a care! 'Twill be a drone game!' and thus was my morning droned away, with his foolish buzzing, and wasplike impertinence."

"Nay, he is but a butterfly. 'Tis thou who art waspish, Thyra, to be vexed with so harmless an insect. He does but flutter to and fro, displaying his gay painted coat, vainly, and vain; but leaving no venom, inflicting no sting."

"But I tell thee, Ophelia, there is a sting in his presence, for me. My father hath, I know, set his heart on bringing about a match between this silly fly and myself. Now, though I do not believe that young Osric hath one thought of the kind, for all his hoverings round me, yet I fear lest an inkling of my father's wish should generate that which his own brain could scarce originate,—an idea; and that idea, the one of wooing me to be his wife."

"Thou dost not desire to be a wife, Thyra?"

"I say not that;" said Thyra, blushing; "but I desire not to be Osric's wife. I will tell thee honestly, dear girl. There is a man whose wife I could wish to be—whose wife I hope to be. A man whom I love, and who loves me; a man whom it is an honor to love; and whose love it is a pride to have won. But this man cannot ask me to become his wife, until the redemption of his patrimony from mortgage, shall give him a right to claim me openly of my father; and meantime, you cannot wonder that I should wish to keep all suitors at a distance, who might win his consent, before my lover himself dare come forward to seek it."

"And this lover is———?"

"No other than Eric of Kronstein. You surely must have guessed our attachment. You who have seen us so much together, dear friend?"

"You forget that I have inexperienced eyes—that I am (as you call

me yourself, dear Thyra) quite a novice in such matters;" said the smiling Ophelia.

"You are innocent simplicity itself, sweet friend; as a girl of your years should be. Still, I thought you must have seen how it was with Eric and myself. We have exchanged hearts. We are plighted to each other by the most solemn vows. He has more than once told me he looks upon me as his affianced bride,—his wedded wife;—I regard him as my husband, and feel that no power on earth should make me give myself to any other than Eric of Kronstein. He tells me that less than half a year will see him reinstated in full possession of his estates. and that then he can ask me of my father with good hope of success. Until that period, therefore, 'tis of the utmost importance our secret should not transpire; but—I could not have felt true to the confidence I have professed in my friend Ophelia had it longer been witheld from her."

The young girls embraced lovingly and heartily. as Thyra received the assurance that her secret should be faithfully preserved.

Some months had elapsed since the last conversation. One evening as the friends sat together, the hours grew, and with them the impatience of Thyra. She was expecting lord Eric, who had promised to come; but still the time for his appearance went by, and he came not. His visits now, were generally at a late hour; but night drew on, and yet he came not.

Ophelia's attendant arrived, with the coach to fetch her home. And she left her friend pacing to and fro in the grounds, by starlight, unwilling to abandon the hope of his coming, even then. But as Ophelia reached the garden gate. and was about to step into her coach, she percieved Trasco, lord Eric's servant. He entered the grounds. and she could see him deliver a letter to her friend; who placing it in her bosom, hurried back to the house.

Next morning. at an early hour, Polonius entered the apartment where his wife and daughter were, and by the ostentatious perturbation of his manner, evidently desired that they should ask what was the matter. The lady Aoudra dutifully did so.

He told her that he had that moment received inteligence, of a cir-

cumstance which had occasioned great consternation in certain quarters It was reported that lord Eric of Kronstein, whose affairs were long suspected to be in an embarrassed state, was discovered to be utterly ruined; that he had accumulated debts of large amount, that he had gambled away his patrimonial estate, that he was not worth a farthing, and that in order to escape from the crowd of demands which pressed upon him, he had, last night, under favour of darkness, embarked in a vessel bound for the Archipelago. His creditors were outrageous; and Polonius added, that he had reason to believe many gentlemen of high rank were among the most furious against him, on account of the numerous debts of honour which were thus left uncancelled.

"I confess I cannot feel much concern for them; they are probably, for the most part, little better than himself,—gamblers, and spendthrifts;" said Aoudra.

"My dear, your virtue makes you hard upon fashionable follies;" said her husband. "Conscious of our own integrity, we should be lenient to others more exposed to temptation. You can scarcely judge of those which beset young noblemen of spirit, and with means at their own disposal."

"But their spirit sometimes leads them to use means not at their own disposal. This lord Eric of Kronstein, when he staked at the gaming-table sums that were not in his rightful possession, was guilty of more than folly; he acted basely, unjustly. Besides, if my memory serve, I have heard this same lord of Kronstein accused of even worse vices than gambling. It is whispered that he is a libertine,—a practised seducer."

"My good lady, how often must I caution you against giving credit to whispers, and hear-say, when they affect the character of those in high station. It is the vice of the envious, to slander those with whom they cannot aspire to be equal. Besides, you are too strict—too austere in your judgment of such matters. These are scarcely more than pardonable errors,—faults and follies to be expected in a handsome young fellow of his rank and age."

"As I have understood, this Kronstein is not so very young. He has reached years that ought to be of discretion, very long since."

"Ay, well, it may be so. I know not of my own personal knowledge. But I must not tarry here; I must away to a privy-council meeting that sits this morning. His majesty laid his gracious commands on me to let him have, without fail, the help of this poor brain of mine. He is pleased to think it of some little avail in weighty questions that concern the state. Well, well; it may be so. It may be so."

Away hurried the courtier; and the silence that ensued after his departure, was first broken, by Ophelia's asking her mother, "what did you mean by calling lord Eric of Kronstein a libertine?—a seducer? I never heard the words."

The lady Aoudra looked at her daughter with a tender earnestness. "The better for mine innocent child, that she has never heard them, never known their meaning. Better still could she have remained in ignorance evermore of their evil import. But my Ophelia will soon be a woman; she will mix with the world; she will encounter the ill, as well as the good, that exists there; she will find that men's natures are compounded of vice as of virtue; that they are capable of sinful and harmful deeds, as well as highest and most meritorious actions; that they ofttimes work mischief instead of benefit; woe instead of weal; and that guile frequently lurks beneath the most specious seeming. To guard her against such sinister assailants, 'tis needful she should know the nature of her danger; a danger most imminent in the sphere to which she is destined,—a court."

Gradually, then, and very heedfully, did this tender mother lift the veil from her young daughter's mind. She told her how the selfishness of man, frequently under the pretence of love for his victim, sacrifices her innocence, blasts her good name, betrays her to shame and misery, and then leaves her to ruin—to utter perdition. "Disgrace, pollution, wreck of fair honor, peril of body and soul, follow in the track of such a villain's footsteps, wherever his fatal admiration chances to alight;" said Aoudra, vehemently. "And such deeds are called fashionable follies, and pardonable errors of youth! The world is charitable in the allowances it makes for the worker of all this evil, though severely tyrannous to the injured party. But let the multitude be tolerant as it will to the

titled libertine, I, for my part, must ever hold deliberate seduction as one of the most heinous of crimes, and continue to manifest my abhorrence of the seducer in proportion with my estimate of his guilt. I hold it to be a base guilt—a cruel guilt; 'tis the advantage taken by knowledge of ignorance,—by selfishness of generosity; 'tis the infliction of deadly injury, beneath the mask of feigned love. 'Tis cowardice and treachery in one, and in the vilest form. Shame, double shame, on the betrayer rather than on the betrayed!"

"But such a betrayer,—a libertine—a seducer,—you believe lord Eric of Kronstein to be."

"Such I have heard him described; by one too, who thought she was doing him honour—fixing another feather in the cap of his gentlemanly qualifications—in ascribing to him such a character. A man of gallantry is, I believe, the polite term. A gallant action, truly, to win the trust and love of a poor maid, and then requite her with destruction."

"My poor friend! And this is the man she deems worthy of all esteem and liking. To whom she has given her whole heart!" exclaimed Ophelia. "'Twill be best kindness to her now, to reveal her secret to you my mother, that we may have your experience and counsel to aid her. Can we not save her from committing her fate irrecoverably to such a man's care? But he is gone! Still, the knowledge of his worthlessness, will help to console her for his loss."

Hastily she told her mother, of Thyra's attachment for Kronstein; of all she knew of him herself; of her former meeting with him; of his request that she would not revert to it; and then, as the story of Jutha was unfolded, owing to the recent better knowledge she had acquired, it struck herself with a new significance, while to the lady Aoudra it revealed a fearful tale of sorrow and wrong.

"I should have been with thee, my child. Told at the time, as it occurred, and as it then struck thee, to a mother's ear, all might have been well. A child should ever have at hand, her, to whom every scene, every event, together with the ideas they may engender, can be confided. But even yet, much mischief may be prevented. We will hasten to your friend Thyra—to warn her against the evils she can avoid; to comfort her in the grief she will have to endure.

On arriving at Cornelius's mansion, they found from her attendants, that the lady Thyra had not yet left her room.

"She lies late, ordinarily, dear mother. Let us seek her in her chamber; Her friend Ophelia is privileged to come to her rooms at all seasons,—even when she is, as now, a slug-a-bed."

She went at once to the sleeping apartment. She saw at a glance that Thyra was not lying there; but as she was retiring, a something within the curtains, at the bed's foot, caught her eye. It was the figure of her friend, half hidden among them. Ophelia went gently forwards, to embrace her; but as she extended her arms to wrap them about Thyra's form, it swung heavily away from her, a mere heap of inanimate matter—an image,—a corse! It was the dead body of Thyra, hanging, where her own dsperate hand had stifled out life. Near to her was afterwards found, a paper, with these words:—

"My Father!—forgive your lost child. Oh, lost, lost, indeed,—every way lost! You destined my hand to one whom I could not love. I pledged faith, affection, honour,—all, to one whom I loved only too well. He whom I so fatally trusted, has proved false. He fled. What is left me, but to die? Deal indulgently by my memory, for the sake of what I was to you, when,—an innocent child at your knee,—your blessing rested on my head. Let the thought of me, as I was then, be all that shall live in your remembrance of THYRA."

When Ophelia was lifted from the floor, where she had fallen prostrate, she was in strong convulsions. The shock she had received, produced a severe illness. For a long space she lay in the utmost danger, now wandering in delirium, now sunk into a heavy stupor. From one of these deep sleeps, she once awoke, stretching forth her hand feebly, and uttering a faint word or two. Her mother, who had never quitted her side, perceived the movement, and bent over her, to catch the sense of the murmured sound.

"Is the king dead?"

"I trust not, dear one. He is absent in Norway; and the last despatches brought intelligence of his safety."

"Methought I saw him, dead;" said Ophelia. "I have been dreaming strangely."

Her mother spoke soothingly; striving to compose and divert her attention from dwelling upon this. She smoothed and arranged the pillow beneath the feverish head; she put some cool beverage to the parched lips, whispering the while, loving, cheerful words. But Ophelia reverted to the theme; and her mother, finding her inclined to speak, and that she did so with none of the agitation which marked her words when she wandered, let her muse on, thus, half aloud.

"He seemed dead, as I saw him—though he moved before me, waving his arm toward them. He pointed to them, as each appeared."

"Of whom do you speak, dear child?"

"Of those figures—those women. It was down by the brook—among the reeds—beneath the willow;—not the stream in the wood—but the brook yonder, which flows into the castle-moat. That solitary spot—all rush-grown, and shadowy—where the water creeps on sluggish and slow, margined by rank grass, and river-weeds,—you remember?"

Her mother gave token of assent.

"It was there she sat,—the first figure I saw. The night was obscure; the clouds scudded athwart the sky;—the moon's light struggled feebly through them; there was a veil of haze upon tree, and shrub, and brook; but I saw her plainly, and knew her at once, though her long hair fell drooping over her knees as she sat. I knew her, before she shook it back, and wrung her hands, and moaned over the little white face that lay upon her bosom. It was Jutha, mother!"

The lady Aoudra would fain have prevented Ophelia from proceeding; but she feared to do harm, by checking her in her evident desire to speak on.

"I would have gone towards her. but my feet were rooted to the spot; while, close behind me, there gradually shaped itself into substance a form that seemed to grow out of the shadowy night air. It became the distinct semblance of the king, as I saw him ride to the Norwegian wars, in coat of armour, and with truncheon in hand, not long since; save, that his face, in lieu of being lighted with hope of conquest, life-

like, and animated, was pale and all amort—ghastly, and set in death. He turned this wan visage full upon me, as he pointed to the figure of her who sat lamenting; and then she vanished."

"Dear Ophelia, thou shalt not recall these sad images; let me tell thee, dear one, of thy father, who——"

"But there were two others, I saw. One was my poor Thyra. I knew her by a terrible token." And Ophelia's voice became nearly extinct, as she added:—"her livid throat, mother; and there was a space between her feet and the ground, as she glided past me."

A moment's pause; and then Ophelia went on.

"But she faded out of my ken, also, as the mailed figure again stretched forth his pointing hand. The wind sighed amid the reeds. The heads of nettles and long-purples were stirred by the night breeze, as it swept on mournfully. The air seemed laden with heavy sobbings. Then I saw one approach, whose face I could not see, and whose figure I knew not. She was clothed in white, all hung about with weeds and wild flowers; and from among them stuck ends of straw, that the shadowy hands seemed to pluck and spurn at. The armed royalty waved sternly, but as if involuntarily, commanded by yet a higher power than his own will; and then the white figure moved on, impelled towards the water. I saw her glide on, floating upon its surface; I saw her dimly, among the silver-leaved branches of the drooping willow, as they waved around and above her, up-buoyed by her spreading white garments.

The mother shuddered, as her eye fell upon the white night-gear of her child, telling the vision. But, at this moment, Polonius softly entered the room, having heard from Guda, that his daughter had awakened, better; and that she was talking more collectedly, than she had done since her illness. He was soon busily engaged, in his half fussy, half kindly manner, chiding Aoudra for indulging Ophelia with too much licence of speech; and making many remarks equally sapient and facetious, on women's love of talk, their proneness for confabulation and gossip.

"They will let each other talk—rather than not have talk toward," said he; "but you, lady-wife, and you, my girl, must be patient yet

awhile, and let rest and perfect silence do their work. Quiet is restorative. Give it its full trial, 'beseech you."

Thanks to Aoudra's tender nursing, Ophelia was restored to health. But a more severe blow, than any she had yet sustained, now awaited her.

Death, which had spared herself, took her mother from her. It is true that the anguish of sudden separation was not theirs. For some time Aoudra lingered; hers was a gradual decay, without pain, and without loss of faculty. She was able to give her child those counsels which should best protect her in her approaching entrance upon the world's experience; while the daughter was permitted the comfort of yielding the gentle ministerings—the loving tendance which best alleviate sickness and suffering. The anxious mother would often recur to the nature of the perils which most peculiarly threaten a young maiden introduced for the first time to the society of men of the world; men, her superiors in rank, as in artful experience; and from the exercise of which art to her prejudice, no conscientious scruples would deter them. The mother thought it behoved her in an especial manner to guard Ophelia by this pre-knowledge of the dangers that would environ her, when left alone as she felt her child soon must be, with no female guidance, no other protection than her own heart. And how was this heart to counsel her, were it not previously fortified and instructed by an understanding of its probable hazards, and of its best sources of defence against them? Aoudra deplored the necessity that existed for thus forestalling in her daughter's mind an acquaintance with the existence of vice; but she felt it to be a necessity, and she did not shrink from the performance of her duty. She consoled herself, also, with the reflection that to learn the nature of vice is not to become acquainted with vice itself, or the practice of vice; that to know of evil is not to know evil; and that to perceive the perils of sin, is no allurement to sin. On the contrary she felt that a virtuous nature as instinctively shrinks from the pollution of crime, as purity recoils from mingling with impurity,—there subsists mutual repugnance to combine. She therefore hesitated not to point out evil to her young daughter, as the surest means of averting it.

"But not only, my child," Aoudra once said, "have I to caution you against the viciously-disposed among men. Even with their best simulation, there is something that betrays itself of such men's real propensities, to act as a warning and a repellant to one of pure inclinations. There is Claudius, the king's brother, for instance.—a licentious unscrupulous man; who, unless my instincts have played me false, and done him grievous injustice, would be restricted by no consideration of honour or duty in the pursuit of his desires. From such coarse homage as his, were it offered to her, my child's own delicacy and native good-feeling would at once prompt her to shrink. It is the good, the gentle, the refined in manner, the accomplished in speech and deportment, the cultivated in imagination and intellect, against whom my daughter must also learn to guard her heart, lest such qualities betray her into a premature gift of that heart, fatal to her peace of mind. Tell me, my child,—it is to your own mother you are speaking, remember,—tell me if you know one thus distinguished."

Ophelia was standing behind the large chair in which Aoudra reclined, so that her face was unseen; but as she leaned over, and kissed the wan cheek, her mother felt the glow she could not behold.

"Since I have heard that his highness, the lord Hamlet, has returned from Wittenberg," said Aoudra, "I have always believed that you, dear child, could not fail to note in him the maturity of those excellences, of which I remember he gave such fruitful token in earliest youth. Even then I could foresee what the future man would be, from the nobleness of nature, which shone conspicuous in every word and deed of the young prince. He was in truth a royal child—a noble boy! And as he grew into manhood I still marked, on each of his successive returns to Elsinore, how worthily he fulfilled the promise of his boyhood. Such a mind and heart as his, seen as they are through those dark expressive eyes,—now full of intellectual fire, now softened by sensibility;—seen as they are through his most beautiful smile—a smile peculiarly his—so gentle, yet so arch, so pregnant of meaning, so persuasive in its sweet fascination—can scarcely fail of winning for him the favor of any woman whom he should seek to interest."

"But must the yielding him her favorable thoughts, be so fatal a surrender, for the woman whom he could love?" whispered Ophelia.

"For her whom he could love,—truly, and in truth, love,—no, assuredly no;" said Aoudra. "Were a woman well convinced that she had indeed become possessed of his true affection, she would but exchange a mutual treasure in the full bestowal of her heart's best feelings upon such a man as Hamlet. But let her be sure—entirely sure—of his love for her, ere she permit her fancy to engage itself too fondly with his image. Let her beware that his thought is as deeply fixed upon her, as hers could be upon him, ere she allow her own to occupy itself too curiously with his merits. Let her securely know that his heart is firm-set in constancy and truth towards her, ere she weakly suffer her imagination to become enamoured of excellences only too well calculated to inspire a passion, which if hopeless, would be fatal to her peace of mind."

Thus it came, that—from her mother's warning, at this time, as, from her father's and her brother's admonitions, at a subsequent period,—Ophelia had the perils which awaited her, in her future life at court, peculiarly impressed upon her mind.

After the lady Aoudra's death, both the king and the queen made it their study by their tenderness and almost parental kindness of attention to the motherless girl, to lighten the affliction of her loss. They were, in their behaviour to her, rather like affectionate and gracious friends, than her sovereigns. They showed by their eagerness to have her as much as possible with them, that they would fain act the part of loving relations by her; and she soon learned to regard them with as fond an attachment.

The prince Hamlet joined his royal parents in their attempt to soften the grief of Ophelia; and in this gentle task, his own growing preference for her, gained strength and fixedness of purpose. His kindness and sympathy were enlisted in her behalf; his refined taste was attracted by her maiden beauty; his delicacy of feeling taught him to delight in her innocence, her modesty, her retiring diffidence; his masculine intellect found repose in the contemplation of her artless mind, her untaught simplicity, her ingenuous character; his manly soul dwelt with a kind

of serene rapture on the sweet feminine softness of her nature. As time went on, tokens of his increasing regard, awoke a responsive feeling in her breast towards him. But while this fair flower of love was springing up between them,—near to it lurked in unsuspected rankness of growth, the foul unwholesome weed of a forbidden passion.

It happened that a courser of matchless breed was sent from a distant court, as a present, to that of Denmark. The king bestowed the gift on his son, Hamlet; and one morning, queen Gertrude, and Ophelia, were leaning from the balcony of a window over-looking the court-yard of the castle, that they might watch the prince, as he went through the varied paces, and tried the several merits, of the high-mettled horse. The interest of the sight absorbed them wholly; their eyes were riveted upon the animated scene below, and they were unconscious that any one was in the room near to them, when Claudius stepped close to where the queen was bending forward; and, standing just within the open window that led on to the balcony, a few paces behind her, he murmured:—"This hath slipped from your majesty's arm." She turned, and saw that he had just picked up from the floor, her bracelet, which he held towards her, but not within reach.

"Will your grace receive it at my hand?" he said, without tendering it any nearer; but holding it as it were, in manner of a lure, that she might step within the room from the balcony.

She did so, saying:—"I thank you, my lord, for the pains you have taken, that I should not lose what I prize so highly."

"You may requite them;" he said. "Yonder silken trifle,—that heaving ribbon, blushing and fragrant,—a carnation set 'midst lilies," he continued, pointing to a crimson knot she wore upon her bosom, "shall be rich ransom for the jewel."

"Were it not for the young girl so near to us, for whose innocent sake I indulge you with this lowered voice, my lord, you should not dare speak thus;" said Gertrude, glancing towards the balcony, where she had left Ophelia.

"I rejoice in her presence, or in aught else, that procures me this

concession,—this chance. Could you know the fever of solicitude, with which I have watched for such a precious moment—could you know the anguish of seeing you ever near, yet ever removed from my——"

"My lord—I entreat—I insist; no more!" interrupted the queen. "Give me the bracelet."

"Not without its ransom. The last token was torn from you; this, I am resolved, shall be yielded of your own grace, accorded to me by your pity. That womanly heart, could it only know how sorely I need comfort, would not refuse me its compassion."

He saw that she could not hear unmoved, an allusion to his unhappiness,—offspring though it was, of a criminal passion. In such a woman as Gertrude, the sight of the influence her beauty had upon his senses, excited involuntary interest. There was that in her voluptuous nature, which responded instinctively to the luxurious ardour of the passion he had dared to conceive and avow. Instead of in her heart resenting, and by her manner repelling the boldness of his warmth,—instead of resisting its effect upon herself, and repressing its expression in him, she could not help yielding to the secret guilty pleasure of knowing it to exist. She allowed herself to contrast its unhallowed fire, with the pure love of her wedded lord; and, sensually judged, the one seemed superior in fervour to the other.

The wife, who admits such thoughts, so judging, is already adulterate in spirit.

Yet still her feeble soul struggled to preserve a show of virtuous indignation at the insult of his admiration.

"Know you to whom you speak, my lord? Do you remember that I am a wife?" she said, in reply to his last speech.

"Too fatally,—and that you are not mine." He struck his forehead with his clenched hand.

"Cease, sir; think that I am your brother's;—your queen. You strain our patience."

"And do you owe me no indemnity for that which I have shown, in my long-silent torture? Let me have the token I covet; or I keep the gem."

"You abuse your advantage, my lord."

"Misery breeds selfishness;" he replied. "I have abided too long in bitter, hopeless misery, to neglect the one poor gain within my power. Grant me the silken toy."

"I dare not let my husband miss his gift from my arm;" said the queen, hastily detaching the ribbon.

"Neighboured as this has been, a thousand times more precious!" he exclaimed, as he snatched the breast-knot to his lips, and returned her the jewel.

Within a week of that time, the realm of Denmark was thrown into dismay, by the sudden death of its monarch. The good king,—so it was reported,—while sleeping, as was his afternoon wont, in the orchard which formed part of the palace-grounds, had been stung by a serpent; and, from the venom inflicted by the wound, he had instantly sickened and died.

Ere the nation could recover from its consternation; and while the rightful heir to the crown was plunged in filial grief, Claudius seized the crown, and caused himself to be proclaimed king. So artfully had all his plans been laid; so resolutely and so promptly did he carry them all out, that he established his claims to the succession, or rather, fixed himself firmly in the possession of his usurped dominion, before the public voice, on behalf of its lawful prince, could be upraised to dispute his pretensions. Scarcely had this first bold step been securely taken, when it was followed up by the solemnity of coronation; and shortly after, by the ceremonial of marriage between the reigning monarch and his late brother's widow.

The habitual acquiescence with which royal proceedings are for the most part regarded by the populace, could hardly restrain the expressions of amazement, and dissatisfaction, which these events excited. But they occurred in such rapid succession, were carried with so high a hand, and were executed so peremptorily, that they passed without open murmurs, without attempted opposition. Moreover, the lavish splendour, with which the two rites of royal marriage and coronation were solemnized, had

their effect upon the vulgar mind, in causing them to be regarded with curiosity and interest, rather than with reprobation. Claudius knew the full advantage of investing his royal proceedings with the glare of pomp and ostentation, as a means of dazzling the public eye; and he omitted no circumstance that could blind its judgment. He caused the rumour of the surpassing magnificence which was to mark the approaching ceremonies at the Danish court to be spread far and wide; and, among the many attracted from a distance, to witness so gorgeous a scene, young Laertes, Ophelia's brother, came from France, that he might be present.

He was pleased with this opportunity for spending some time with a sister whom he so tenderly loved; for though during their life they had been much separated, yet in those intervals that they had been together, he had learned to appreciate and love the modest worth, the affectionate nature of this gentle being. Besides, they had been in the habit of corresponding with one another by letter; and thus the attachment between them had been maintained and cemented. To this means of intercourse, he reverted, when,—the regal pageant concluded,—Laertes prepared to return to France. As he bade her farewell, he prayed her to let no long time elapse ere he should hear from her.

And she, in her own quiet, though earnest way, in her own simple sincerity of manner, replied:—

"*Do you doubt that?*"

"What to this was sequent thou know'st already."

FINIS.

TALE IX.

ROSALIND AND CELIA; THE FRIENDS.

"We still have slept together,
Rose at an instant, learn'd, play'd, eat together;
And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans,
Still we went coupled, and inseparable."
As you like it.

"'Tis a pretty sight, neighbor, is't not?"

This question was asked by one of two women, who stood together beside a cottage entrance, on the borders of a wood, enjoying an afternoon gossip. The speaker pointed towards the cottage window, upon which the rays of the western sun were pouring their beams, tempered by the green leaves and boughs of the surrounding trees through which the light made its way. She who was addressed, advanced towards the casement, and looked in. Within the room, were two ladies, seated near the open window. One of them had her eyes fixed upon the other, on whose lap lay two infants,—a babe on either arm, both cherub faces closely pressed against her bosom, while both at once, drew thence their sweet milken meal. The eyes of the one lady expressed tenderest interest in the gentle task she watched, mingled perhaps with a shadow of regret that it could not be hers to share; while on the face of the lady who nursed the babes, there sat that divine expression, which no other earthly task inspires, of so pure, so holy, so benign a character. The

little ones themselves looked steeped in that rosy, cosy, lumbrous content, betokening fulness of happiness,—or that happiness of fulness, which forms their summit of felicity. Their rounded dimpled limbs lay crossed and intertwined in loving co-mingling upon the cradle-lap; the little fingers of a hand of each, lay curled and clasped together; the same pretty murmurs of satisfaction, the same soft nestling warmth of cheeks, the same comfortably imbedded noses, the same lazily opened, lazily closed, lazily raised, lazily drooped eye-lids, told how complete was the sympathy between the two happy little rogues in the enjoyment of their dual repast.

The peasant woman who had peeped in, to look upon this picture, stepped back to the cottage entrance; owning it was, in sooth, as her neighbour had said, 'a pretty sight.' And then, she went on to ask her how it happened, that these ladies and babes came to be her inmates.

The two gossips sat down side by side, in the porch. The one nursing her little girl, Audrey; the other holding by the hand, her young son, William, a shy boy of about six years old; while the former told how all had fallen out. She said that one evening lately, her husband, who was a wood-cutter, had been, as usual, hard at work in the forest close by, when he heard the sound of wheels on the road that threads its skirts. This road being little frequented by travellers, the good man had hurried to see whose could be the rare approach; when what should he behold, but a grand coach, drawn by four horses, and surrounded by several horsemen,—attendants, and outriders, all betokening the equipage and retinue of some great personage. Two gentlemen rode among the mounted horsemen; they were leaning upon the coach-windows, and holding gay converse with the ladies seated withinside; so that, as the cavalcade passed, it left a sound of laughter and good-humour behind it upon the air. But the last echo of the mirthful voices, and of the trampling horses, had scarce died away; the last glimpse of the bright housings, and trappings of the equipage, were still visible through the cloud of dust that environed and followed it; when the wood-cutter saw it come to a sudden halt, and the whole retinue seemed thrown into confusion. It was evident that some accident had hap-

pened. The little-used forest-road was in so neglected a state, so full of deep ruts, so strewn with huge stones, so rugged and uneven, that when the wood-cutter reached the spot, he found that the springs of the coach had suddenly snapped, and that a wheel had come off. The vehicle lay on its side; the horsemen were all dismounted; the attendants hurrying to and fro, attempting to render what assistance they could, while the two gentlemen were anxiously endeavouring to extricate the ladies from the overturned coach. One of them had fainted, or was stunned, from the violence and suddenness with which she had been thrown forwards; while the other was equally unable to move, from a strain which her ankle had received, in trying to save the child on her knee from falling. At length, however, both ladies were rescued from their perilous situation; and the wood-cutter, proffering the shelter of his cottage as the nearest at hand, they were removed thither, borne carefully in their attendants' arms. The babes,—for in the coach, each lady had had a child upon her knee,—were unhurt. Thanks to the impunity that most frequently attends the unresisting way in which baby muscles yield in tumbling about, and to the protection, regardless of self, which the muscles of those who hold children invariably and instinctively afford in the moment of danger, the little creatures had escaped all ill effects from their fall.

Not so with the two mothers. The one lady had a severe sprain; while the other, on recovering from her swoon, found that the shock had banished from her bosom the power of yielding nourishment to her babe. The sense of her own deprivation in this calamity, was lost in anxiety for that of her child; and her sole concern was how to find one who might replace herself in the sweet office, which she would so reluctantly, yet so joyfully, now see performed by another. There seemed a prospect of the poor lady's solicitude being relieved, when it was discovered that the wood-cutter's wife was herself also a nursing-mother; but no sooner was this hope espied, than it failed them; for nothing would induce the babe to partake with the infant rustic; the patrician child cried for food, but seemed to disdain it from a plebeian source. In the midst of her distress, the mother could scarcely help smiling to see the

pertinacious way in which the little one maintained its refusal; while the other lady laughed outright to see, as she said, the insolence of birth, conquering even the pangs of hunger,—the proud stomach prevailing over the famishing one. But her own babe was taking its rightful repast in happy comfort—and she on a sudden bethought her that her sister's child should share with hers. She held out her arm to receive it; and then, there was fresh amusement, to see with what a willing eagerness the saucy urchin partook of the kindred and aristocratic meal.

These ladies were not, in fact, sisters, but the wives of two brothers. They were sisters in rank, and in affection. They were sister-duchesses, and sister-friends. The lady Aurelia was married to Gaston, the reigning duke of the neighbouring province; and the lady Coralie to his brother, duke Frederick. They had been spending some time with their husbands, at a beautiful country seat, called Beaulieu, belonging to duke Frederick, and were returning thence to the court residence, when their carriage was overturned. Beaulieu was situated on the other side of the forest, which was some twenty miles from the court; and the ladies had suffered too severely from the accident, for them to be able to travel on. After seeing them safely established at the wood-cutter's cottage, therefore, the two gentlemen had proceeded on their journey, promising to return frequently during the interval which must elapse before the ladies and their babes could be removed.

All this the good woman of the cottage told her neighbour, as they sat in the shady porch together; the narrative being only now and then interrupted by the bashful advances of the boy William, towards establishing an intimacy with the little Audrey; which she returned, as she sat enthroned on her mother's lap, by graciously kicking him under the chin, slapping his face, tweaking his nose, tugging his hair, and occasionally thrusting her fingers into his eye. He seemed to take all in good part, however, and to receive her repulses as so many favours, holding out his broad cheeks for her to smack, placing his ears within pulling distance, submitting his locks to be wrenched out by handfuls, and meekly suffering her to claw and poke into his eyes as she listed. "Be

still.—be good, Audrey;" said her mother, drawing her back from an onslaught on William's mouth, which seemed made with a view to seize some of his teeth out, but which ended in such a vigorous clutch at his nether lip, that the imprint of her nails was left; "thou wilt anger him at last; he's only too bearsome with thee. Ha' done, then!"

"And so the worshipful ladies have bided with ye, ever since, Nicole? And the one has gone on making twin sucking-babes of her own and her sister-in-law's bearn? And how oft have ye seen his honor, the duke, and his honor, the duke's brother? To think of such right royal company in the forest—and in your own cottage, neighbour. Well, it's enow to make a poor body stark wood wi' pride."

"But the wood-cutter's wife will ne'er be wood enow to be proud with an old friend and neighbour, let who will come to her poor house;" said Audrey's mother; "Nicole will always be glad to see her good friend and gossip, Jeannette, though all the dukes and duchesses in Christendom were to harbour beneath her roof-tree. But as for the two dukes, it must be owned, 'twixt you and me, there's a main difference between them."

"Ay. How so?" said Jeannette, with all a gossip's keenness.

"Marry, the one's a pleasant-spoken, easy kind of man. He'll lean you against that porch, and talk by the score minutes together, just as natural as though he didn't know what a court meant, and had never answered to the name of duke no more than my good man. And to see him pat my little Audrey on the head!—You'd think he was her own father.—Not a bit as if he was doing her an honor,—only a kindness. And then he's so fond of his own little one; and so gentle to his wife. He might be a labourer instead of a lord, for good manners,—he has such a feeling heart, and such a pleasant way with him."

"And the other, thou say'st, differs vastly from him?" said Jeannette.

"Ay, in sooth, doth he," answered Nicole. "We have good cause to be joyful that my lord Gaston is duke over us, instead of his brother. Why, duke Frederick may be a very good gentleman for the court, and for all the grand folks there, and to live among them, and be liked by

them; but he's not what I call a pleasant man. He looks another way, while he talks t'ye; he's thinking of aught else but your words, when you talk to him; he asks questions without waiting for the answer. He's mighty polite, but never kind. He's too courtly with his wife to love her in truth; and I'm much mistook, if she live not much in his thought as his lady, his duchess, and not by her christian name. I've a notion, that, to him, his brother is the reigning duke; and even his own little daughter, is but his heiress. He's a lordly man, and I believe his thoughts are all lordly; certain it is, that his ways and his manners are lordly,—passing rude and disagreeable." The wood-cutter's wife said this as if she had fixed the crowning stigma on duke Frederick's behaviour. She went on to say:—"As for his wife, poor thing, the lady Coralie, she can't see a fault he hath, so blindly doth she affect him. Well for her, poor soul! When a husband's faults are past mending, a wife's eyes are best kept closed by a doting seal."

"And it's acting no friendly part, to seek to remove it;" said her neighbour, nodding her head. "I owe goody Theresa no thanks, but a grudge ever since, for showing me how ill William's father treated me, when he went and listed for a soldier, after drinking away all our poor havings at the ale-house. But God ye good even, neighbour Nicole. Come your ways, William, and leave hankering after little Audrey, who'll none of ye, ye see."

For some time yet, Aurelia and Coralie continued to linger in the woodman's cottage, well-pleased with its pretty situation, its quiet, and its retirement, so well fitted to the loving domesticity of the task they had in hand. The pleasant rambles in the forest, when the ladies had regained strength to walk abroad; the neatness of the rustic homestead; the purity of the air; the dainty country diet, of dairy, garden, and orchard; the absence of all restraint and ceremony in this sylvan life, made them willing to protract the period of their stay amid these simple pleasures; while the visits of their husbands, who constantly repaired thither, prevented them from being deprived of congenial society.

"For my part, dear sister," said Coralie to Aurelia one morning as

they sat beneath the shade of a spreading oak, with their babes, enjoying the balmy freshness, "I could be well content to return never again to a court life, this sweet seclusion pleases me so well. Here, methinks, we could taste the pure delights of a golden age, when shepherds, and shepherdesses, rustic swains and foresters, careless maids and happy damsels, had the wide world—the world of Arcady—to themselves. Here, e'en the courtier may learn to rest his ambition, and perceive how vain an exchange his anxieties are for the peace of such a spot as this. Poor seem the fretful solicitude, the carking moil for place and honors, set against the open-air freedom, the liberty of range, the breathing-space for heart and mind, that here may be his."

"'Tis woman's thought—a lowly-natured, unaspiring woman's fancy, sister mine," replied Aurelia. "What would manly opinion say to such a rural grave of all his darling hopes, his lofty aspirations, his projects of glory and renown? Could a man be content, think you, to barter away all his projects of advancement in the stir and activity of life amid his fellow-men, for a dreaming existence 'neath bough and sky? I'll ask my lord what he says to a shepherd's crook, or a forester's bow, in lieu of his ducal insignia, and thou shalt ask thy husband a like question."

"For my brother Gaston, I could well believe that his contemplative spirit might feel the repose of such a life of nature, nowise unsuited; his philosophic temperament, his reflective habits, his pure tastes, would teach him to find delight in a recluse and pastoral existence; but for my Frederick, I know not; there is that in his ardent, high-reaching character, that might dispose him to scorn the inglorious ease, and tame inaction, as he would probably consider it, of forest retirement. And yet it is precisely on his account that I could wish this present peaceful life of ours to endure."

"That is scarcely the wish of a duteous wife; who has always hitherto perferred the fulfilment of her husband's will to that of her own. Why condemn Frederick to a crook, if he have a liking for a sword or a baton of office?" said Aurelia laughing.

Coralie attempted to respond to her sister's gaiety of manner, but

there was involuntary sadness in the tone with which she said:—"Because I sometimes have my fears, that his eagerness for such things will one time or other imperil him."

"But a wife's jealousy for her husband's honor, will preserve her from a too cowardly alarm for his safety. She will learn to forget his danger in the prospect of his success."

"It is because I am jealous for his honor,—his true honor, that I would have him achieve it without the hazard of things even more precious. I mean not life and limb; but conscience, self respect—they are sometimes risked in the desperate stake for honor—worldly honor. My Frederick is noble, virtuous,—but he hath ambition in that daring spirit of his; and we know how, little by little, the towering growth of that passion o'ertops and crushes all else. In a court life is a perpetual recurrence of temptations to the aspiring nature; and it is therefore I could wish, we were to dwell ever in this wood-land content."

"You view things too seriously, dear sister;" said Aurelia. "You are scarce recovered from your late weakness, sure, to yield thus to vague alarms. My brother Frederick's ambition will but secure for him and for you, honorable distinctions, worthy eminence; and your gentle monition ever at his side, will best preserve him from undue aims."

"It is because I too surely feel that I shall be early removed from his side, that I have allowed myself to breathe my anxieties for him to your sisterly ear, my Aurelia. Since I have begun to open my heart to you, let me do so entirely. Listen to me with calmness, for I am calm myself, even under the full conviction that I must soon leave you, my husband, my child. I commit them to your loving care, my sister. Well have you already proved how truly you can perform the part of mother to my babe—my little Celia. She will be no less a daughter to you, I know, I feel, than your own Rosalind. Weep not, my beloved Aurelia, my sister; could you know how resigned, how entirely satisfied my own heart is, in the comfort of entrusting her to you, you would feel no bitterer regret at this near prospect of my quitting life than I myself do. What is there, after all, dear friend, to dismay me in the

thought of yielding earth, in the humble hope of Heaven? My Aurelia, I am more than content, I am cheerful, I am happy. Look upon me, and see if my eyes confirm not my words."

Through her tears, Aurelia looked into her sister's face, and beheld the truth of her soul, serene in its immortal trust.

Ever after, the manner of the lady Coralie was so uniform in its composure, so constant in its unaffected cheerfulness, that her sister learned to think the prognostics of that morning were but a passing impression, from weakened health, and lowered spirits. She never alluded to the subject of their conversation; but seemed by the animation with which she entered into all the projects for enjoying their present life, and all the plans for their future existence, which Aurelia, Gaston, and Frederick, formed in the happy elation of youth and health, to express her entire sympathy, and unmisgiving concurrence.

Sometimes in their forest-walks, her failing strength would betray that she was unequal to accompany them to such distances as their greater vigour led them to undertake; but she would sit down and rest, or beguile them into loitering, while she stole a moment's recline against a tree, and thus be enabled to proceed. Once they found a spacious cave, where the whole party stopped to repose, and to enjoy the beauty and delicious coolness of the spot. It was tapestried with moss; and though lofty, completely shut in, and protected from the weather. It was so sheltered as to form a cool retreat in summer, while perfectly warm and snug in the winter. They were enchanted with the place; and entertained many a gay proposal of coming to spend here a hermit old age, when the pomps and vanities of a court life should have lost their charms for them. Aurelia cast a furtive glance at her sister's countenance, to see whether it betrayed any symptom of her late secret avowal; but Coralie was on her guard, and no look revealed how unshaken was her belief that she should never reach old age.

But when, after spending still a few more happy days at the woodman's cottage on the skirts of the forest of Arden, the two ladies accompanied their husbands to their ducal home, the tokens of how fatally true had been her foresight respecting her own decline, were no longer

to be concealed. The disease proclaimed itself unmistakeably, and before many weeks were gone, the lady Coralie had passed into eternal rest.

At first, her husband, duke Frederick, felt her loss bitterly; but he was, as his wife had truly known, an ambitious man, and in the ceaseless weaving and prosecution of his schemes for the advancing of his fortunes, and for the obtaining of preferment, he was not long in forgetting his grief.

To his infant daughter, the lady Aurelia well replaced the mother she had lost. From the first tender office she had performed towards the little creature, when she had taken her with her own child, to her bosom, bestowing its gentle treasures of love and nourishment on both babes equally, she had known no difference in affection for either. Celia and Rosalind were alike dear to her. Had they been twin-born her own offspring, she could not have felt a more perfect and undivided fondness for them. She thought of them together, cherished them together, she nurtured them together, she held them in her arms together; and when her arms no longer sufficed for their resting-place, she let them share the same cradle; she let them bathe in the same bath; she clothed them, fed them, and bred them, alike and together.

Between the little ones themselves, the affection grew to be as strong, and undivided, as that which the mother felt towards them. As they grew older, they learned the same lessons, and played at the same games; they studied, as they sported—together. They not only cared nothing for their pleasures, if they were not mutual; but they were also unsatisfied, unless their pains, their little vexations, their youthful troubles, were borne together. It was almost droll to see the implicit way in which they made every event—whether welcome or no—a double one. They seemed to take it for granted, that nothing could befall either, solely. They appeared not to be able to comprehend anything happening to each alone. All was to be between them, scrupulously apportioned to both, equally. If a gratification were accorded to one, she expected a like favor to be bestowed upon the other. If a treat—even a reward, were granted to one, she stayed to enjoy it, and the other waited

as a matter of course, until a parallel indulgence came. Just so was it with a rebuke, or a punishment. If the one were reproved for an error, the other stood ready for correction at the same time. If the one incurred blame, the other seemed to think it her right to be censured likewise.

Once Aurelia had occasion to find fault with her little girl, for some juvenile misdemeanour. But she had no sooner banished Rosalind into the corner, to stand there with her face to the wall, as a fitting shame and disgrace for such giddy behaviour as she had been guilty of, than Celia stepped up beside her, and demurely turned her face away too. Aurelia could not help smiling at the matter-of-course way in which it was done; and it amused her still more, to see, how, gradually, the companionship in exile prevented its being any punishment. For soon the arms stole round each other's neck; the two little curly heads got close together, and there was such a whispering, and tittering, and undertoned sympathy between them, as totally to do away with the notion of penance. Aurelia put on as grave a countenance as she could, and told them to turn round, and look at her. The two little heads faced about; but where was the contrition, the abashed regard, the disconcerted air? There were two smiling-lipped, roguish-eyed, merry little wags as ever met a mother's attempted frown; looking precisely as if there were no such things as faults, or punishments, or repentance in the world,—as if misdeeds were unheard of, penalties needless, and compunction out of the question. There was nothing for it, but to call them to her, bid them promise they would be good in future, while she gave them a hearty kiss of forgiveness a-piece.

Another time, duke Frederick, who was in his way a fond father, but apt to be irascible, and capriciously severe; strict by fits and starts, but carelessly indulgent in general, took violent offence at some fancied disobedience of his little daughter's; and he pronounced as her sentence, that she should be left at home, upon occasion of a forthcoming festival, to which the children had for some time looked forward. It was a grand entertainment to be given in honor of duke Gaston's birthday, in the pleasure-grounds of one of his nobles; and, as an especial treat, the

children had been promised that they should be present. The disappointment was very great, when poor Celia found that his was to be her punishment; and she could not help crying bitterly. Rosalind was of course keeping her company in her tears; but she suddenly brightened up, and said she would devise such brave amusements for their day at home, that they should not need to regret the festival.

"But you are not to stay at home, Rose;" said Celia. "It is only I, whom my father has forbidden to go."

"Not to stay at home! Not forbidden to go! We'll soon see that," exclaimed Rosalind, starting up from the low seat on which they had both been weeping side by side, and running off to seek her uncle.

She came back, her face glowing, her voice trembling. "It's too bad! It's cruel! He says I shall go, if it be only to make you feel your being left at home the more mortifying."

"O, but that it will not;" replied Celia; "the only thing that could make me glad, would be to know that you are enjoying the sight, though I can't."

"But I shan't enjoy it—I can't enjoy it, without you, Celia. You know it well. Stay, I know!" she paused; and clapped her hands. "I know how I'll do. Trust me, I'll manage."

Her cousin tried to make her say farther; but she only skipped about the room, and finally skipped out of it. A moment or two afterwards, Celia heard a crash; and in a moment or two more, Rosalind came skipping back.

"Huzza! It's done! Huzza!"

"Rose! What have you done?" Celia went up to her young cousin, who was much excited, clasping her fingers tight in one another, then loosing them; her eyes sparkling, and her cheeks flushed. As Celia questioned her, the colour subsided, and she became rather pale, but still looked eager and resolved.

"Rose, dear Rose, is it possible you have broken that porcelain vase my father values so much?"

"Yes, I threw it down. Was it not for lifting it off the marble ledge, contrary to his desire, that my uncle forbade you to go to the festival, Celia?"

"It was. I did not know that he would not allow it to be touched; but he thought I knew his orders were strict about that vase, and so he was very angry when he found that I had taken it down."

"Well then, he'll be still more angry, when he finds I've knocked it down. I'm sorry to have destroyed my uncle's vase, but I'm glad he'll be angry with me; now he'll punish me as I wish; he'll give me my own way about staying from the festival, at home with you."

Celia looked rather frightened at this bold step; and so to tell the truth, did Rosalind, when she came to think upon what she had done. But she had no wish to recall it; and the two little girls felt more than ever bound to each other, the one for what she had had the courage to dare on behalf of Celia, the other for what she owed to the daring of Rosalind.

Finally, the good duke Gaston, by the timely gift of a rich vase, with which he replaced the broken one, and by the good-humoured representation which he made of the children's delinquency, obtained from his brother a remission of their sentence; and they both, after all, were permitted to go to the festival.

While Rosalind and Celia were still children, the duchess Aurelia took them with her, one summer, on a visit to a friend of hers, the countess de Beaupré, who had been left a widow with a young son and daughter. They lived in a beautiful spot called La Vallée. It was situated at about the same distance from the court, as duke Frederick's country-seat of Beaulieu, but in quite another direction; La Vallée lying to the north, and Beaulieu to the south of the ducal residence.

In the society of her friend, the countess, Aurelia spent some very happy time; while the two children made pleasant acquaintance and companionship with little Flora de Beaupré, the widow's daughter. They did not like Raoul, the son. He was a haughty, dictatorial boy; and treated the three girls with a sullen disdain, as his natural inferiors and understood vassals. He even seemed to entertain considerable scorn for his mother; a mild woman, who treated him as the heir of the family,

while he was yet a child; and regarded herself as merely an interloper on the estate,—the dowager tenant, until such time as he should be of age to claim his rights, his lawful inheritance. He was a complete feudal lord, in spirit as in fact: and beheld but serfs in all who surrounded him. He would kick and cane his men-servants; and let his little sister kneel to fasten the clasp of his shoe. He would rave and swear at the women-domestics, and suffer his mother to set him a chair. He would take as a matter of course all waiting upon him. His mother might stand with his hat in her hand, his sister might run and fetch his fallen arrows, they might either, or both, be in constant attendance upon him, but he rarely stretched forth his hand to take what they held, until it perfectly suited his own convenience. Raoul, count de Beaupré, was his prevailing thought, as the impersonation of supreme authority; and all created beings else, ranked as mere slaves, ministrant and subservient to his will. There was one person, the especial object of his tyranny, the recipient of all his domineering humours. This was a boy called Theodore, a poor relation—a cousin; nay, some said that he might have claimed even nearer kindred to the late Count de Beaupré than that of nephew. Certain it is that his likeness to the young Flora, who was the image of her father, was singularly striking. He was nearly of her age—had the same delicately cut features, the same transparent complexion; and were it not that her hair was golden, and his jet black, the same head and face seemed theirs. This girlish-looking child was a convenient toy for the young heir. Now his butt, now his plaything; now his lackey, now his laughing-stock; but in all characters, buffeted, jeered, cuffed, mocked, and ill-used as the caprice of the young lord of La Vallée might choose to dictate. No one seemed to think it hard or strange—not even the victim himself; it was so thoroughly an understood thing, that submission was the only thing with which the insolence and tyranny of Raoul de Beaupré were to be received.

Even little Flora, the only one in the chateau of la Vallée who possessed any thing approaching to spirit, never dared remonstrate with her lordly young brother on his behaviour to their cousin; she merely contented herself with showing the boy, in her own person, all the kind-

ness which might compensate for the treatment he received at the hands of Raoul. The affection thus engendered between the two younger children, became a means of their better enduring the despotism of the elder. Theodore, in his gratitude to Flora, learned to bear her brother's insults for her sake; while she forgot her own contemptuous usage in sympathy with the harshness and ignominy to which this boy was subjected.

Altogether, Rosalind and Celia felt it a relief, when the period of their return home arrived; for the conduct of the heir, which from daily habit was scarcely felt by the inmates of La Vallée, oppressed them with a sense of cruelty and malice constantly exercised against unoffenders in word or deed. With the exception of Flora, between whom and themselves there had arisen a strong liking, they regretted nothing there; but the mothers had promised that there might be a correspondence kept up between the little girls by letter, which would furnish good exercise for their faculties, as well as a means of innocent entertainment. The duchess Aurelia, with her usual eagerness to promote the happiness of her two little ones, said that a messenger should be appointed to carry the epistles to and fro between them and their young friend.

Some years passed by in happy study, in increasing improvement; in ever-growing, ever-strengthening attachment between the two cousin-friends; but just when they reached a time of life most, perhaps, needing the gentle presence and guidance of a mother, Aurelia, that tender monitress, that indulgent guardian, was removed from them by death. Her loss made one more strong bond of union between the two girls; it was a mutual bereavement. It was a mutual source of regret, as of consoling thought; they both knew her worth, they could sorrow together, as they could comfort each other, calling to mind her excellences, and promising that her image should abide evermore with them, a virtuous, a strengthening, a holy memory

Duke Gaston, always of a quiet, passive disposition, sank into deep despondency on the death of his wife. Even the love of his daughter Rosalind, had no power to arouse him from the stupor of grief to which

he yielded. He shrank from all society; and hers seemed especially painful to him. He shut himself up in his study, to brood alone. In the hope of giving his affliction its own chosen way to seek healing, she yielded to her uncle's wish that she should accompany his daughter Celia to Beaulieu for a time. Here, in country retirement, amid the beautiful scenes of all restoring Nature, the two young ladies gradually recovered their serenity, and eventually, the blithe spirits proper to their time of life, and to their happy temperament in particular.

Through the spacious grounds of Beaulieu, the two cousins would wander arm-in-arm, indulging many a pleasant fancy, weaving many a bright romance, picturing all kinds of glowing visions. They peopled the glades with dryad shapes, and old pagan stories. For them fauns and satyrs lurked amid the trees, and peeped from thicket, and copse, and bosky grove; for them, the panting Syrinx rustled and cowered among the reeds, shrinking from him who drew but mournful music where his lips had sought warmer response; for them the margins of cool brooks were haunted with the smooth white forms of bathing nymphs, or long-tressed naiads; for them the fresh morning air rang with the shrill horns and baying hounds of Dian, and her huntress train; for them the rills and fountains murmured echoes of the fates of Arethusa, of Acis, and of fair Cyane; for them, thatched cottages were Baucis and Philemon roofs, sheltering highest Jove in his wanderings; for them, each scene had its mythical as well as actual significance.—a classic grace, no less than an intrinsic beauty. Their reading had been such as high-born ladies, in those days, took delight in; and their thoughts and associations were naturally thus coloured. The lore of the poets, the history of old Greece and Rome, the traditions of by-gone ages, with their creeds of imagery and imagination, had stored their minds with ideas which refined and elevated each object in existence. To them all the realities of life possessed the added charm of ideality. They viewed even Nature herself through the purple light of a poetic medium.

After a season, however, the desire of Rosalind to see whether her presence might not now conduce to her father's happiness, led her to urge her cousin, that they should quit the delights of Beaulieu, and return

to what she hoped might prove the duty awaiting her at court. Celia ever one in thought with Rosalind, as soon as that thought found utterance, agreed. On the day appointed, just as they were setting out, they received a letter from Flora de Beaupré, in which she confided to them her anxiety respecting her cousin, Theodore, who was suddenly missing from La Valleé. "My brother Raoul is much incensed at his flight;" thus concluded the letter; "he has spared no pains to obtain traces of the fugitive; but as yet none have reached us. Since our dear mother's death, I have observed a kind of ill-smothered ire take the place of the old submissive patience with which my poor cousin used to bear the slights and harsh treatment of his lot. I tried to preserve forbearance between them as long as possible. I endeavoured to moderate in one, his exercise of power, and to maintain in the other, his passive endurance of evils he could not avoid. But it seems that this endurance was at length taxed too far. He must have resolved to fly from a tyranny, from which there was no other escape; and is doubtless, by this time, equally beyond the reach of Raoul's vengeance, and of my regret. Poor boy! Dear, dear Theodore! Shall we ever see each other again? That you will pity me, I know, dear friends; for you knew his gentle qualities. What he was, as a mere child, when we were all children together, he has grown up still to be,—good, uncomplaining, full of humility, and all kindliness."

"Poor Theodore!" echoed Celia as she closed the letter. "Ay, he was ever, only too full of humility, too kindly, too gentle. Had it been my lot to dwell within the reach of such a tyrant arm as the odious Raoul's, I should never have submitted; I should either have faced my injuries, turned upon them, and resented them, or shown them a fair pair of heels long ago, as he has done at length."

"And, poor Flora, I say, as well as poor Theodore!" said Rosalind, "How deeply the affectionate girl regrets him."

"Ay; perchance too deeply," said Celia. "Dost not think that it may be, Flora regrets more than a cousin, in Theodore? Is't not too possible, that amidst all that sympathy, and interest she felt for him while beneath her brutal brother's power, and with her constant care to

screen him from its worst inflictions, a warmer liking than cousin-love may have sprung up in her heart? If so, 'poor Flora,' indeed!"

"I do not believe it;" said Rosalind. "She speaks not of him in terms such as women use, when naming him they love. What woman ever called her lover 'Poor boy!' No, no, trust me; Flora regrets Theodore with but honest affection; with but simple cousin-love.'

"True, those words 'poor boy' warrant Flora's heart free from all but cousin-love, as thou say'st, Rose. But tell me what is there, after all, truer, stronger, or warmer than this same cousin-love;" said Celia. "I verily think, I shall never love lover with any love half so worth having, as that with which I love thee, coz."

"But we are more than cousins, we are friends, thou know'st," said Rosalind. "Relationship hath some delicate natural links of its own, doubtless; but there is a voluntary affiancing of two kindred beings,—kindred in more than blood, kindred in spirit, in heart, in mind, in soul,—that welds them together into one. All the sledge-hammers of the world, with their weight of envy, malice, or detraction brought to the assail, would fail in sundering such steeled affection. They but the more finely temper it. The materials would give way, ere that which incorporates them; the two hearts would break, sooner than the bond which unites them."

The two ladies were pursuing their way homeward, as they conversed thus. The weather was so very lovely, their road, skirting the forest, so beautiful, that they preferred the freedom of horseback to the confinement of a coach. They accordingly rode, attended by a proper retinue, such as beseemed their rank.

The afternoon sun enriched the scene with its warm glow of beauty, while the shade of the trees, which fringed their road on one side, formed a welcome screen from its ardour. They paced on easily, walking their horses, and talking to each other; when they neared a spot they had often stopped to admire. It was a kind of well, or rude stone fountain, celebrated for the sparkling purity of its waters, which flowed from a moss-grown rocky recess; it was situated on a grassy slope, was bowered in with festoons of brambles, wild-rose, and woodbine, and over-arched by a thick umbrage of tall and spreading trees.

As the ladies approached, they perceived a figure sitting by the side of the well. It was that of a stripling. His head rested on the stone brink; his limbs were stretched forth in the attitude of thorough weariness; his dress and shoes were covered with dust; his whole appearance betokened that he had come far, and that he slept the sound sleep of fatigue. The trampling of the horses on the turf failed to arouse him; and he stirred not from his position. His face was partly hidden upon his folded arms, as he leaned against the well-side; but one of the grooms, dismounting, to obtain a cup of the fresh fountain water for his young mistress, touched the lad on the arm, and asked him if he had no better manners than to lie lounging there in the presence of ladies; and then the countenance revealed to view, shone with good-humour, though he affected to be angry at being disturbed.

"My lady may desire a draught of cold water," he said, "but her need must be great, 'an it equal mine for rest; my weariness against her thirst, for any sum thou lik'st to name. I fear me, though, the stakes would be all on one side, like an ill-built paling; for my pocket is free from trouble,—it hath not a cross to bear."

"I am sorry thou hast been awakened on my account, good friend;" said Celia. "Sweet rest is too precious to be interrupted for an idle wish, that scarce amounted to a want. Besides, the cup could have been filled without disturbing thee."

"A lady's caprice has broken many a rest, madam, ere now;" returned the youth, glancing up at her with a merry look, while he removed the cap from his head, as he stood before her to reply to her kind voice and words. "But in truth, there are some faces well worth losing sleep for; and had I not awakened to look upon the one I now see, I had lost a sight better than twenty such naps—sweetened though mine was, by hunger and way-faring."

"Thou hast walked a long distance?" asked Celia.

"All the way from Chateau Fadasse, madam, which lies some score miles eastward of this. To tell your ladyship heaven's truth,—and there is that in you which forbids a man to think of uttering aught else,—I ran away from that very Chateau, no longer ago than this morning.'

"Chateau Fadasse?" replied Celia, musingly. "I have heard my father speak of a baron of that name."

"Ay, madam; the same, doubtless," replied the youth. "I was born there; and bred there, if that may be called breeding, which was rather a breaking-in to live upon ill-usage and broken victuals. In the baron's household, my father filled the office of jester until Death called him to a better place, promoting him from the Fadasse service to that of the King of Terrors. Though service be no inheritance, yet I succeeded to my father's, and served the baron for a fool,—as I was, staying so long to be made a fool of, and to be kicked and cudgeled like an ass."

"A breaking-in, truly; one less gentle than befalls a horse;" said Celia.

"Not one of the baron's stud but was envied by his jester, madam; they were snugly stalled, full fed, and caressed; while the only privilege I enjoyed, was, that the chevalier, the young heir of the house, made it his sport to treat me like a kind of human foot-ball, on which to exercise the toe of his ill-temper. At last I bethought me that I might take it as a hint that I was kicked out; and so set forth with a broad prospect before me, if not a fair one,—the wide world."

"And now thou hast no home, my poor friend?"

"If your ladyship call me so, or, better still, be a friend to me, then have I no great need to bewail, what is, after all, no great loss. To draw upon those few drops which every man hath a scant store of from his mother, and to waste them in bewailing a home such as that—which was no home,—but rather a house of bondage to me, is extravagance and spilth,—a casting away of good eye-water."

"But hast thou nowhere to lay thy head?" pursued she, amused with his replies.

"No other pillow than holy Jacob's, madam,—a stone. But that which brought a dream of angels to a patriarch wanderer, may well serve an erring youth like myself. Nor no snugger hangings than the blue canopy yonder; but many a better man than I, hath had as spacious a bed-tester."

"Thou hast not wherewithal to eat a meal, hast thou?" she asked.

"To say sooth, madam, no daintier food than hog-fare,—beechmast and acorns; with mayhap, hips and haws, and such odd bird-berries: but the hedge and the brook have furnished meat and drink, ere now, to famishing scholars, why not to a starving fool? The teeth of youth are sharp and sound, as its appetite is sharp set; and these are main helps to digestion. Nothing like the animal spirits and light heart of under-twenty for imparting a relish, let the victual be ever so tough and unsavoury. Hardest fare comes scarce amiss, to years not yet of discretion."

"I like this fellow's spirit, well, Rose;" said Celia turning to her cousin! "'tis a cheerful spirit; one that will take him his bites from the cherry-cheeked side of the apple, through life. What say'st thou? Shall we bid him come with us? We'll provide him a home; and he shall supply us with mirth."

"A fair bargain, and a kindly; thou'lt do well to strike it, coz."

"Art thou content to follow me?" said Celia, again addressing him.

"Ay, lady. Find but a stepping-stone beyond this round, slippery ball, the earth; an' you set your foot on it, mine shall scramble after. There is something in that look, which puts willingness, e'en impossible feats into heart and sinews of him that should be thy follower."

"Then, mount; and come with me. Gaspard, bring forward the sumpter-mule, that this lad may ride with us. And give him a ration from our store; for it's ill beginning new service by fasting."

"And my stomach hath struck a hollow sound for every hour I've spent in the forest since I entered it; which was at daybreak this morning. I thank your ladyship for the timely thought."

"And now tell me thy name, good fellow;" said Celia, as he fell in with the cavalcade, a little to the rear of her side.

"I was called cub, lout, hound, or cur, idle varlet, lazy swine, and such like, for the most part: though, in good sooth, none of them was my rightful style and title, as your ladyship's discernment will have already told you. But, truly, I care not now to be known by the name I bore when blows and privation were my daily having. Yonder well-brink, where I rested my head, being the stone on which turned my

good fortune. I'll call myself, henceforth, no other than Touchstone. 'Tis the name given me by a fine brain of invention; and that may e'en stand in lieu of godfather and godmother, gossipry, and apostle-spoons."

"If it be the saving of apostle-spoons, it may yet need thee a long spoon, in the close quarters to which, through lack of a christian name, thou may'st be brought with the Prince of Darkness. Thou know'st the old proverb."

"Marry, the meeting with yourself, lady, is the silver spoon in the mouth of my new-born fate. I'll look to have no other."

"Nay, I think thou'lt furnish the spoon thyself. Thy pate will be thine own wooden ladle."

"It shall furnish my lady with a plentiful dish of merry conceits, skimming for her the froth of folly, and the cream of jesting. Thus the fool's treen spoon may indeed help himself, while it serves his mistress. It keeps his own heart light, and her in good humour."

"To be kept well stored in good humour, is both her benefit and his;" said Rosalind. "See thou that thy humour be good, fool, and I'll ensure thee thy mistress's good-humour."

On their arrival at the court, Rosalind's first care was to enquire for her father. She was met by the young lord Amiens; who was not only by blood related, but by affection deeply attached to duke Gaston. He told her that the duke still kept himself in strict retirement; that he evinced the same disinclination to see any one, or to take interest in the active concerns of life. He mentioned that even a visit from a very dear old friend of the duke's, had failed to rouse him from his profound melancholy, though, (Amiens added) he believed this friend had spoken very urgently. The friend was a country gentleman, a worthy knight, sir Rowland de Bois; and from the well-known attachment that subsisted between him and the duke, it had been hoped, that his remonstrance would have produced a salutary effect. The good knight had left his country mansion, and come up to the court, where he had not been for

some years, expressly to see his sorrowing friend, when he learned into how baneful a despondency he had sunk. In the private interview which took place between them, sir Rowland left no argument unurged that his honest heart could devise as likely to move the duke. He besought him to remember his duty to his people, who could not fail to miss his wise and temperate government, were this ceasing to take part in public affairs prolonged. He implored him to beware, lest in yielding so utterly to his grief, he might not be guilty of a weakness, a selfishness unworthy a ruler who had the happiness of others to consider; of others whose welfare depended on, and had been confided to, his paternal care, as their lawful sovereign. He even hinted to him that advantage might be taken of his absence, while preserving so complete a seclusion and inaction; that a sinister influence might be at work to dispossess him of his dukedom; that his own deed would allow conspiracy and enmity to effect his ruin; and that, in short, he more than suspected much evil had already been the result of this protracted seclusion, by the scope and opportunity it afforded to unscrupulous ambition in attempting to usurp his rights. Duke Gaston had replied to this, that he knew his old friend's warmth of zeal; and however he might feel bound in gratitude to the love from which it originated, yet that he knew too well the strong prejudices which it engendered, to believe there was any ground of fear from the quarter to which sir Rowland's hints pointed. He said he knew that they referred to his brother Frederick; that the knight had always avowed doubts of his integrity; but that he could not allow himself to entertain unworthy suspicions of one whom he had known from childhood. The knight murmured something about "lived with, but not known;" and of "a transparent nature fancying others as clear as itself, and believing that it can see through a dark one." But he went on to say, that there was still one other consideration which ought to have weight with his friend Gaston; and that was the happiness of his young daughter, Rosalind, which would be seriously affected by seeing that of her father irretrievably lost.

The father said it was among his few comforts, to know that the love which subsisted between his child and her cousin Celia, prevented her

happiness from being too fatally involved in his; and to know that this innocent affection preserved her from sharing, in all its poignancy, the affliction which overwhelmed himself.

"But let it not destroy you, my friend;" said the hearty old knight in conclusion. "Be your own noble self. Strive against this poisonous sorrow. Its indulgence is a wrong to yourself, and to your people, your friends, your child, and even to her whom you mourn. I loved my own wife deeply and truly,—she brought me three fair sons,—and when she left me and them upon earth, I felt that what I could best do to deserve joining her in heaven hereafter, was to be the best father I could to her boys."

Duke Gaston wrung his old friend's hand, and in a broken voice promised to think of his words. They parted; and Amiens said that since sir Rowland's visit, it had been touching to see the ineffectual efforts made by his unhappy cousin to banish at least the external evidence of his grief. He said that the duke's endeavour to assume cheerfulness was even more moving than his usual self-abandonment to depression. The one was natural, and had its own sad solace; but the other was forced, and most painful to witness. The young man added, that his grace had signified his willingness to listen, when he offered, as he had so frequently done before in vain, to sing him some of the old airs once loved so well; but that the attempt had been followed by such a burst of anguish, that he had never since ventured to repeat it. Rosalind, with tears, thanked Amiens for his tender sympathy and care towards her father; and felt in her heart grateful, not envious, that this young man's presence was an accepted comfort, where her own was too keenly associated with her mother's image, to render it endurable.

When he had seen her restored to composure, he left her to return to the duke.

As Amiens retired, Touchstone, willing to divert Rosalind's thoughts by a sally which he saw she could now bear, said:—"That gentleman hath a warbling face. I take it, his voice is sweeter to sing, than his wit is keen to speak."

"He hath a true heart, fellow; which is better than either sweet

voice, or keen wit;" replied she. "He is a loyal and a loving friend to my dear father; let that ensure him thy respect."

"I cannot fail in it to whomsoever your ladyship favors; which will answer for the large amount I mean henceforth to pay to myself.—your fortunate, though unworthy servant. Self-respect is noble, and now I am to be a courtier, and to live among nobles, I intend laying up a store."

"Courtiers live by paying respect to others, fool, not by cultivating self-respect. They too often lose it altogether, in seeming to pay a servile homage to those who have no superior claim to regard, beyond the power of bestowing a ribbon or a vacant garter."

"Garters and ribbons are pretty knacks enough, in their way; but they show paltrily, methinks, against a few sterling things we wot of;" said Touchstone. "I cannot think the gewgaws are worth deforming soul as well as body. A cringing spirit, a perpetual stoop in the shoulders, an ever-crooked back and knee, are scarce compensated by a star on the breast. The power to hold up your head, and look every man straight in the face, I hold to be the higher order of privilege."

Here, the princesses' gentlewoman, Hesperia, entering to offer her services, the two ladies retired to their room, to take off their riding-gear.

The next letter from Flora de Beaupré not only confirmed her young friends in their conviction that she regretted Theodore as her cousin, the companion of her childhood, the object of her sympathy and pity, merely, but it also discovered many other matters. She told them that the fugitive had contrived to send her secret intelligence of his welfare. That he had resolved upon finding his way to Rome, in order to satisfy his ardent thirst to behold the glories of Art there treasured; and that he was not without hope of being able, by diligent study and perseverance, to win for himself an honorable career as an artist.

Theodore had, from infancy, manifested extraordinary talent for limning natural objects; and though this gift had had little opportunity for developing itself under the ruffian treatment of Raoul, yet it had been

secretly indulged; as the walls of his own narrow chamber could testify, being covered with myriads of rudely-scrawled sketches and designs. This had inspired the thought of earning an independence, could he but once free himself from the thraldom of his life at La Vallée. He had lately asked himself why he need continue its endurance; and had resolved the question by flight. His only regret in leaving the spot where his unhappy childhood had been spent, was the not being able to take leave of her who had been its sole joy amid so much misery; but he had not dared to risk the discovery of his plans, or to compromise Flora, by imparting them to her. He was brooding on his regret, when he came to the end of his first few hours' journey from La Vallée. The sun was high in the heavens; and he had stopped to rest during the fervid hour of noon beneath a small grove of trees, just within a park fence. He had not been lying there many minutes,—stretched at length upon the soft cool grass, and indulging the pleasant feeling of liberty, although mingled with the regret concerning Flora,—when he beheld a young gentleman approach, whom he knew to be Victor St. André, the owner of the domain, from having seen him once or twice at La Vallée. There had been a slight intimacy between Victor and Raoul, as owners of neighbouring estates; but the little assimilation which existed in the respective characters of the two young men, would have prevented farther advances towards friendship on the part of Victor, had it not been for one other person at La Vallée. In the sister, Flora, he soon learned to feel a potent attraction for him, that far outweighed the power which Raoul's qualities had to repel him.

There was that in Victor St. André's frank countenance and generous bearing, which inspired a feeling of trust and liking in the heart of the poor fugitive youth. Although he had seen him but seldom,—for the subordinate position filled by Theodore at La Vallée did not permit of much communion with its guests,—he suddenly resolved to confide in this young gentleman, and to make him, if possible, the medium of farewell to his cousin Flora.

His story was soon told; and as promptly met with sympathy, and friendly offers of assistance from the hearer. Victor St. André warmly

expressed his approval of Theodore's resolve to seek freedom and independence; he besought him to prove that he believed him sincere in his earnest desire for his success, by accepting a sufficient sum to carry him to Rome; adding that it was, in fact, but an advance which he made, in payment of the first picture he should paint, to secure its possession for himself. The boy looked up with a smile at this kindly augury.

It was this very smile of his; it was his voice, so like hers; which, —besides the interest that the lad's own sad story had inspired in the generous breast of Victor,—caused him to speak so warmly, and to take so active a part in assisting her poor cousin. That brilliant complexion, those soft appealing eyes, brought the face of her he loved so forcibly before him, that his offered help was scarcely less a delight to himself than to the young lad.

Then Theodore went on to beg he would contrive means of conveying to her his farewell message; he entreated him to be the bearer of it himself, that it might reach her securely, and without the knowledge of her tyrannous brother. And then Victor felt as if the eagerness with which he undertook the charge, must betray his joy in having to devise means of speaking privately with Flora; but the boy had no thought beyond that of sending his gentle cousin tidings of himself, to relieve the anxiety which he knew must be hers, when his absence should be discovered.

With earnest thanks to the friend he had so fortunately encountered, Theodore proceeded on his way; and Victor St. André lost no time in repairing to La Vallée, that he might execute his welcome commission. On arriving there, he found that Raoul de Beaupré was just mounting his horse to ride over his estate, and superintend some improvements that he was planning. He proposed to Victor to accompany him; but finding him show no great disposition to do so, he said:—"Pray use your own pleasure; if you have a greater fancy for wearing away an hour in rest after your ride, pray walk into my poor house. You will, I know, waive the ceremony of my dismounting to accompany you in. My presence is absolutely needful yonder."

St. André, secretly congratulating himself upon the haughty young

gentleman's necessity for absence, in a few courteous words, begged he would not think of deferring his ride upon his account; and in another moment had the satisfaction of seeing Raoul set spurs to his horse, and gallop off.

Seeing a page in the fore-court, Victor beckoned to him, threw him his rein, and bade him send some one to enquire of the lady Flora de Beaupré whether she had leisure to receive one of her brother's guests.

In the interview that ensued, not only was Theodore's message delivered, but Victor's love was told. No sooner had Flora's heart been put into a flutter by the unexpected approach of her brother's guest, unaccompanied by that brother, than it was relieved on her cousin's account, by the tidings she heard of him; but then no sooner had the poor little heart been so far set at rest, than it was made to beat more quickly than ever, by the avowal of St. André's passion; and it had hardly become aware of that secret, ere it learned another.—that of its own feelings; and it had not recovered from the agitation into which that discovery threw it, before it was asked in exchange for the proffered one of Victor; and it was still in the tumult of all this emotion, when it gave itself as it was asked—frankly and fondly to him for ever.

After the first raptures of the lover, he was as eager for Raoul's return, as he had been glad to see him depart; for he longed to have the gift confirmed; he knew the feudal privileges of a brother, in disposing of a sister's hand, and he could not rest until he had obtained the young count de Beaupré's sanction. Flora, at the thought of Raoul, turned pale; and murmured a timid dread of his displeasure.

But Victor would hear of no reason for alarm. He was conscious of no just cause of impediment to his suit; and he could not think that mere haughty caprice would influence its denial

The event proved that he was right in his hope. Raoul, who knew that Victor St. André was a gentleman of good lineage, a man of unblemished reputation, and a soldier of honorable renown, signified his consent to these proposals for a union with Flora; merely stipulating that some months should elapse before the marriage took place, as his sister was still so young.

Rosalind and Celia heartily rejoiced at these happy prospects of their friend, Flora de Beaupré; but shortly after, events happened, which still more nearly affected them.

The good old knight, sir Rowland de Bois, had not over-estimated the mischief that was brewing, in consequence of his friend Gaston's fatal self-absorption. This long withdrawal, this total abandonment of all state duties, had given duke Frederick the occasion he had so long warily sought. At first he merely supplied his brother's place; ostensibly conducting the affairs of the realm during his temporary absence; and carrying on the offices of government until such time as duke Gaston should have recovered from the grief in which he was plunged. Then gradually, he suffered his zeal to warm in its displays; he allowed himself to utter regrets that the lawful sovereign should be so engrossed in self-commiseration as to be incapable of fulfilling the duty he owed his people. He contrived that these regrets should find an echo elsewhere; he artfully sowed disaffection and displeasure among the populace towards their rightful sovereign; he managed that his own administration should contrast advantageously with his brother's conduct as ruler; who, shut up with his sorrow, was unconscious of all this. There were many faithful partizans of duke Gaston's, who would not have failed to plead his cause with the people, and endeavour to represent his abandonment of their interests in its most favorable light; but the schemes of the ambitious Frederick were so subtle, so carefully planned, so deep-laid, and so cunningly carried out, that the evil was effected, ere it was well suspected to exist. Accordingly, when quite secure that all was ripe for his purpose, he caused his brother to be arraigned on the charge of neglecting his dukedom's interests; he procured his conviction, his condemnation to exile, and his own nomination to the ducal supremacy in his stead. Duke Gaston was banished; and the usurper succeeded to his throne. Before the people could well know whether they were pleased or displeased, their old ruler was expelled, and the new one installed. By several popular acts, duke Frederick strove to gain popular favour; but though the multitude were appeased, and vulgar clamour was silenced, yet the voice of the faithful few murmured against his arrogated authori-

ty. But these, when he found they were not to be won over, he quelled, by having them attainted as disloyal subjects. They whose only fault was being too loyal, were treated as traitors—their property confiscated, and themselves banished the dukedom. Thus, many worthy gentlemen followed their late sovereign into exile; among the rest, Amiens, duke Gaston's cousin, whom reverse of fortune only attached the more closely. Duke Frederick, in his paternal consideration for Celia, would not allow the sentence of banishment to include Rosalind. He knew that to separate them would be to break his daughter's heart; and Rosalind had the comfort of knowing that her father was accompanied by a true friend, who would supply her place to him.

Had not the old knight, sir Rowland de Bois, died at this crisis, he too would doubtless have joined those who followed duke Gaston in his exile.

After a time, Rosalind had the joy to learn that his vicissitude, so far from having increased the weight of her father's sorrow, had had the unhoped for good effect of arousing him from his stupor of despair; that he had seemed to gather strength under adversity, and to have attained a degree of philosophic composure, and even of cheerfulness, such as his friends at one time had not dared to think could ever again be his Hearing this, his child could scarce regard that as a calamity, which had brought about so blessed a result; and when she thought of him as a happier man, she almost forgot to deplore that he was no longer a duke.

Meantime, her own life was made a happy one, by the fast friendship that existed between herself and her cousin Celia; whose affectionate nature, and tender love for Rosalind, besides her native sprightliness of disposition, inspired her with an ever-charming flow of spirits, which served to keep them both gay and blithe-hearted. It was an especial delight of Celia's to beguile her cousin into that mode of feeling, when a smile was too faint a token of gladsome fancy; when nothing save a hearty laugh—that sweet ringing laugh of Rosalind's—would serve to express the exhilaration of spirit, the innocent joy of heart, which sprang from youth, health, and goodness, needing but Celia's playfulness to call it forth.

Then Celia would say ;—" What a delicious thing it is to hear thy laugh. Rose ! If I am high fantastic melancholy, its most distant music will suffice to set my heart to dancing-measure."

" Thou melancholy ! It must be high fantasy indeed, that would persuade thee thou had'st thy spirits tuned in that low key. Leave all such affectations, I prithee, to the gravity-mongers, who have no better claim to be thought capable of thought, than the putting on of a moody brow. A pretended melancholy is the shallow device of a wiseacre to get a character for wisdom ; and a real melancholy befits scarce any thing but guilt. 'Tis one of the merriest-conceited of jests, when such as thou,—good-conscienced people,—play at melancholy. Good conscience is not the stuff to breed genuine melancholy out of, believe me."

" How know you that I have a good conscience ? What makes you so boldly pronounce upon me ?"

" Marry, by those sure tokens ; pleasant and infallible. Thou sleep'st sweetly o'nights, a sound token ; thou wak'st cheerily and fresh o'mornings, a strong token ; thou'rt ever free to note the thoughts of others, a good token ; thou hast no brooding secrets of thy own ; thou hast a hand frank and ready to relieve the wants of those who need thy help, which denotes thy own few cares. Thou can'st eat thy meat without peppers and sauces, a wholesome token ; thou car'st for no wine in thy fountain draught, a pure token ; thou ne'er stick'st pins awry, a pointed token ; ne'er wear'st unbecoming colours, a vain token, an' thou wilt, but e'en let it pass for a woman's token ; ne'er goest slatternly in thy garments, a neat token ; or slipshod, a standing token ; or neglect'st thy mirror, a clear token. Thou sing'st, and sigh'st not, when lost in thought, a glad token ; thou seek'st thy bed with a step untired, and a spirit as alert as when thou first arose, a confirmed token ; and thou art almost as soon asleep as a sailor, when once thy head touches thy pillow, a token upon which thou may'st set up thy rest that all I have said is true."

" Trust me, coz, I think, in the matter of an unbruised conscience, we may both thank the gods for having cast our fortunes in such happy

mould, as to have given us no cause to lay the burthen of self-reproach on our souls;" answered Celia.

"'Twould be a step in charitable judgment, if the favored among mortals thought of this when holding their moral heads above others less cared for by the blind woman on the wheel;" said Touchstone.

"Thou art there, art thou?" said Celia. "Hast thou carried our messages to those ladies I bade thee call upon, this morning, in our name?"

"Ay, madam. But truly, it demands some of the fool's philosophy, —videlicit, laughing at that which we cannot mend,—to enable a man bravely to face such insufferable moppets of silliness as some of these court ladies are. One will build you her reputation upon an arm or an eye; and then you shall be fanned into a fever of admiration, or ogled out of countenance. Another will make a stand upon the beauty of her ankle, and then you must abide all the shock of display, for she will receive visitors no otherwise than reclining on her couch, playing a thousand pretty angers, saucy petulances, and pouting, the while, with her foot. A third sets up for a wit; and then, pray for Heaven's mercy on your patience and ears, for she will have none. A fourth ——"

"But can'st thou not find a favorable word for one amongst them all?" interrupted Celia, laughing. "Wert thou not favorably received?"

"Nay, the pretty peats were only too favorable in their graciousness towards your poor servant, madam; 'tis of their favor I complain. I care not for it, I vow. A sophisticate woman pleaseth not me. There is madame Lucretia. You shall scarce see her her own natural self, though you took her in her night-cap. She's farded inch-thick with affectation. She's perfumed to suffocation with the musk of pretence The color on her cheek is part paint, part mock-modesty. She leers and ogles by rule; sighs and languishes on system. Her smiles are calculated, her frowns prescribed. A simper is her heartiest laugh; and no genuine tears spring to her eyes but those that belong to a yawn."

"What think'st thou of madame Christine?"

"Ay, there now! What a piece of pinched precision it is! Those thin, compressed lips of hers, look like an owl's beak, with its tight-held pretence of wisdom."

"If our court-ladies fare so hard in thy esteem, how stand the men in thy good liking?"

"Faith, madam, I can scarce call them 'men.' Had you said court-gentlemen, I could have answered better; for your courtier seems a different kind of creature from your man. He bends so low, when congeeing and making a leg to the idols of his worship,—place and power, that he seemeth a link in Nature's animal creation, somewhere between human biped, and base quadruped."

"Thou art hard upon court-sins. Hast no growing sympathy that can teach thee tenderness for the foibles of thy fellows, now thou art become a courtier also?"

"Madam, 'tis a trick of sageness, and conscious weakness, to censure those who are given to such errors as we ourselves have a leaning towards. So shall we 'scape suspicion. Moreover, 'tis well to affect slight regard for advantages within reach. Now that I am at court, court-vices, court-pleasures, court-benefits, are to be held as things of nought. Were I amid rural beauties, then, a life of nature and simplicity, should be my theme of disdain, while clowns and boors should wince beneath the edge of my scornful wit."

"As thou wilt; e'en let courtliness feel some of its keenness now. What other cuts hast thou for our court-people?"

"Why, madam,—to return to the court gentlemen,—there is young monsieur Le Beau, with those tuzzes of hair on his cheeks and chin, and those furzes of hesitation in his moral courage. He'll tremble to shake hands with a man out of favor; and put off associating with him until they meet in the company of angels. He dare as soon be seen conversing with the arch-fiend himself, as with a poor genius; and he will turn his back on a saint in disgrace, to curry favor with a coroneted sinner."

"But are not some of them lively companions? How say you to that facetious gentleman, the young lord Dubadin?"

"His gestures are flippant-nimble as a squirrel; but his ideas are heavy in their dull monotony as a caged bear, lumbering, ceaseless, to and fro, behind his bars. Bruin, as I have seen him in the court-menagerie, shouldering out the hours of his captivity, grudgingly indignant, ever stolidly striving against his own ponderous incapacity, is fittest emblem of my lord Dubadin's struggling thoughts. The companionship of such a fellow is among the most intolerable of pains."

"All pain is hard to bear; 'tis well to find philosophy for the endurance of a dull coxcomb, among other diseases we have to encounter," said Rosalind.

"Aches and pains are of divers degrees and qualities, madam;" replied Touchstone. "There are some pains more difficult to bear with, —morally as well as physically,—than others. Is there any one that feels not the degradation of owning to a colic? And who shall be so hardy as to crave sympathy for a cut thumb? The bravest of us would not dare bemoan himself for it."

"Therein are yet women better off than our lords and masters. While sovereign man is denied the privilege of so much as a wry face—we may weep, tear our hair, sigh and lament ourselves to our hearts' content. But, come, your list of tolerable and intolerable pains. Give us your catalogue."

"Imprimis, there is your headache, which is an intellectual pain; then there is your heartache, a sentimental pain; there is the ache from gouty toe, a wealthy pain; there are the aches from sabre and sword thrust, from pistol and gunshot wounds, all esteemed honorable pains. None of these, men account it shame to endure; but few care to encounter the obloquy, as well as smart, of a plebeian pain, such as starving; an undignified pain like stomach-ache; an abject one, like sea-sickness; or a paltry pain, like finger-ache, though its claims to distinction were fester or whitlow. But see! There is your ladyship's messenger; with a despatch from La Vallée."

The letter from Flora de Beaupré was a long one. It told of the period of happiness she had enjoyed while her promised husband was still near her. But then came the bitterness of parting, when he had to leave

her and join his regiment ; and after that, came the dreariness of absence, during which her brother Raoul's morose humours, and cold arrogance, had seemed more painful to bear than ever, from the contrast they presented with the qualities which distinguished her warm-hearted lover. Since then, however, worse had arisen. A certain chevalier Fadasse had taken a hunting-seat in their neighbourhood ; he had formed an acquaintance with Raoul de Beaupré, which acquaintance had ripened into a strong liking, while this liking was still further cemented by a violent passion which the chevalier had chosen to conceive for Raoul's sister. When the count de Beaupré found that the chevalier Fadasse was the heir of a wealthy and powerful baron, the circumstances seemed at once to obliterate all recollection of Victor St. André's claims ; nay, even to efface all memory that his own promise had been already given ; for, upon the chevalier's applying to him for permission to address his sister Flora, he had at once granted it, with every expression of satisfaction at the prospect of seeing her united to his excellent friend Fadasse.

Poor Flora's dismay may be conceived, when she discovered how far matters had already gone, before she had had so much as a simple suspicion of what was brooding. Even had not her heart been wholly preoccupied, it could never have been won to any liking for the chevalier. He was a consummate coxcomb ; one whose profound sense of his own merits nothing could disturb or destroy. He was incorrigible in vanity ; invincible in self-conceit. He had the most overweening estimate of his personal, as well as worldly advantages ; he entertained the most unmisgiving belief in his consequence as a handsome young bachelor, a chevalier, and the heir to a barony How could he suppose that the individual in whom concentered so many attractions, could by possibility be an unwelcome suitor to any young lady, whom he should chance to favor by his preference ? The smirk with which he professed to lay himself and fortunes at Flora's feet, told how perfect was his conviction that they would not lie there long ; and that no other than the proper amount of maidenly diffidence which a young lady was expected to show on such occasions, could prevent her snatching them up at once, with ill-concealed exultation at the prize she had won.

When therefore, in surprise at seeing him kneel before her, thus professing, she started back, averse and displeased, he only saw what he expected,—the usual affected reluctance of a young damsel at the first avowal she receives of that which she would fain hear; and he said:—"Sweet queen of flowers, in beauty, as in name, this timid denial is but an added charm. Far be it from me to brush with too sudden-rude a breath the bloom of modesty from the gift which you now withhold, only to bestow with added grace. Let it come at your own sweet time; grant that gentle heart to me in all meet season. Blushing, and coy as you will, be your yielding; it befits your honor, and the delicacy of my passion. Thus let me thank my sovereign lady."

But as he attempted to raise her hand to his lips, Flora de Beaupré summoned spirit to reply:—"I know not what I have granted, sir, that deserves your thanks. If it be your suit, that is yet unconceded, as it is yet unmade. I have heard no suing, though much assuming, sir."

"The dignity of your feminine reserve, lady, shall have all due observance from me. I reverence too highly that charm of your sex—delicacy, not to give it the full amount of ceremonial it hath a right to exact. You shall have all the form of entreaty, of humble petition, of devout prayer, that so lovely an idol deserves. Your surrender shall be as tardy as your most exquisite sense of maidenly decorum shall demand—but let not your adorer—captive and conqueror in one—languish too long. Be generous in your season of appointed power."

"Sir, you mistake me altogether. Let me be explicit. I desire not your subjugation; seek not mine. I have no wish to see you enact the part of a slave; leave me no less free."

"Fairest bud of beauty, Flora, imperial blossom of blossoms," replied the imperturbable chevalier, "this pretty simulation of inexorableness pleases me,—as a part of your lady right; but the next time I shall plead, let me hope to see its rigour abated, and some slight show of favor substituted, on which I may live until such time as you shall see fit to let me behold the whole treasure of my possessions in that gentle heart."

"You will not apprehend me, sir. Understand this; the heart can never be yours."

"Your brother has promised me that it shall, lady. I know you will ratify the pledge;" he said with his most insinuating, and most satisfied smile; "but let it be at your own time and pleasure. Meantime I may not, I will not, I cannot despair."

The chevalier withdrew; leaving Flora biting her lip, half in vexation at his impertinent self-sufficiency, half in amusement at the mode in which it was displayed.

But soon she found no cause for smiling. The affair became only too serious. All her protestations to the chevalier were treated in the same way,—as mere feints to veil her glad acceptance; while all her remonstrances with Raoul failed in moving him one jot from that which was now too evidently his settled purpose Her love for Victor St. André gave her courage to brave her brother's ire, by reminding him of his pledged word, passed on a former occasion; but he set aside all her urging, by saying that he had chosen to recal that word, for good and sufficing reasons; that he did not consider himself bound by a promise thus made; that he knew the power which feudal rights gave him in the disposal of a sister, still a minor, in marriage; and that he gave her to understand, once for all, that it was his intention to avail himself of that power, by bestowing her hand on the chevalier Fadasse. He concluded by haughtily desiring her to conform to his will without a murmur, as he was resolved to enforce her obedience, if she were not wise enough to give her compliance.

The chevalier, without a misgiving of all this, retired to his chateau of Fadasse, to prepare for the reception of the bride. After his departure, the scenes between the brother and sister were terrible. As Flora beheld all her hopes melt away beneath the stern unrelenting of Raoul, she became only the more frantic in her entreaties that he would spare her the misery of becoming the wife of one man while her soul was given to another. As the time drew on for the chevalier's return to claim her, and to wed her in the chapel belonging to the mansion, the fear that all would be so privately and peremptorily carried, as to effect this detested union in spite of all her struggles to prevent it, drove her to despair, and in agony, she flung herself at her brother's feet, and be-

sought him to kill her on the spot, rather than condemn her to what was far worse than death itself.

Enraged to find such pertinacity where he had expected nothing but instant submission; exasperated at resistance, where he thought to meet none other than the ready yielding which till then had followed his lightest demand, he spurned her from him, declaring that nothing should alter his determination to have her married, at the conclusion of the month then begun, to the chevalier; adding with a solemn oath:—"I am so resolved you shall then be his, that, if the last day of this moon pass and you are still unmarried, you may e'en wed Victor St. André himself. I have sworn it, and nothing shall move me from my vowed decision. Though I retract my word, I will not break my oath. But in order that there shall be no chance of your evading its fulfilment, I shall lock you up, young mistress, in the turret-chamber, whence I think e'en your own hot love will scarce furnish ye with wings to escape."

Flora de Beaupré had swooned there, where she lay, at her cruel brother's feet; but he, nowise moved by her extremity of anguish, had raised her in his arms, borne her to the turret-chamber, and locked her in, scarcely waiting till she was restored to consciousness. Here she had remained ever since; alone, save when her jailer-brother brought her, in sullen silence, some daily food. She had beguiled her solitude by writing an account of her misery to her friends Celia and Rosalind, though with scarce a hope of the relation reaching them. But one evening she had been so fortunate as to observe their appointed messenger in the garden, beneath the turret-window, looking about, as if in quest of her. She contrived to attract his attention; and by means of some ribbons knotted hastily together, she had succeeded in lowering her own letter, and raising the one brought for her.

Her friends gave her hard fate their cordial sympathy, and talked over many a plan for aiding her to escape from her imprisonment, and from the worse fate which was to end it; but none of them seemed feasible, none of them seemed to offer the remotest chance of success.

"See, here she says, that the window of her turret-chamber is strongly grated;" said Celia; "I think I remember hearing that it was originally

used as a dungeon for refractory feudatories. Out upon him! To use his sister no better than a serf. Even could we succeed in gaining access to the outside of her window, by some one who should scale a ladder planted for her to descend, I know not how she could be drawn through those close-set iron bars."

"Minerva, mother of mother-wit, though thyself motherless, inspire me with thy inventive wisdom!" cried Rosalind with sudden glee. "God Phœbus with his light, Dan Mercury with his cunning, lend me their several aids! For methinks, I have a scheme seething here in my brain, which perchance may prove a goodly one for our purpose. The gods delight in sacrifices; but surely not in such a one as this,—the offering up of an unhappy virgin on the altar of a detested wedlock. Let us invoke them to further a plot which shall prevent poor Flora's immolation."

"Right willingly;" said Celia; "tell me thy scheme, that I may help thee, heart and soul, with prayer for its success, even if I cannot assist thee in its planning."

"Let us to our room, then; where we may talk, secure from all chance of eaves-droppers."

The chevalier Fadasse was walking one evening in his orchard. He paced backwards and forwards, and seemed employed in pleasing meditation, for he not frequently smiled. The subject of his thoughts might be guessed from the complacent glances he ever and anon threw upon his white hand, as he spread it in divers positions; now extended, now bent; now with the little finger erect, now with all of them curved gracefully over the thumb; now held sideways, that he might see its shapely joining on to the wrist; now upwards, and open, that he might trace the delicate veins and lines within side. This new and curious kind of palmistry, was varied by an occasional downward look of approval at his foot, or an appreciative regard at the calf of his leg, as he caught a sidelong glimpse of it, turning in his walk to and fro; and more than once he stopped to observe the fall in his back, or the carriage of his

head and shoulders, distinctly marked in the shadow of his figure, thrown upon the gravel-path. At the end of this path, too, there was a marble basin, holding water; and in this natural mirror, he could see clearly reflected, what to him formed the most interesting, and most admirable portrait in the world. He was startled from a profound contemplation of this object, by the sudden appearance of a strange figure. It was a man masked, and muffled in a dark cloak, who stood immediately in his path.

"What mummery is this?" asked the chevalier with a frown.

The figure stood for a moment, immovable, with folded arms, looking fixedly upon the chevalier Fadasse, without a word. Then he slowly raised an arm, stretched it forth, waved it, and dropped again into his former position.

At this signal, six men stepped forward, from behind a hedge, or thicket, near at hand, which formed one of the boundaries of the orchard. They ranged themselves three on each side of the chevalier, and then stood stock still; awaiting, as it seemed, the bidding of him who had summoned them.

"What would you with me, gentlemen?" said the chevalier in a supercilious tone.

The six merely bowed in silence; and turned their faces, which were singularly wooden and meaningless, towards the masked man. He seemed to be the director of their movements; which were, to the full, as mechanical, and void of any spontaneous appearance, as their countenances.

"Will your worship condescend to explain?" asked the chevalier of the masked man. But the mask mutely bowed, also; with the added courtesy, of laying his hand on his heart, which said, as plainly as gesture could, "Excuse me." Then the mask produced something from beneath his cloak; and before the chevalier was aware of his purpos, advanced briskly upon him, and whipped the something over his head and ears; by which means the chevalier found himself blindfolded. He raised his hands hastily, endeavouring to snatch off this something; but he found it to be a kind of iron head-piece, securely fastened by clasps, or springs, impossible to undo.

He uttered some violent exclamations; but they were totally unheeded. No word was spoken in reply; but he could hear a sound of horses' feet, surrounding him; and presently he felt himself lifted up in the arms of the six, mounted, and a rein placed in his hand. In a fury, he flung himself off, blindfolded as he was, at the risk of breaking his neck; but he soon felt the six busy about him again. They forced him into the saddle, and held him there, three on each side.

Feeling his utter helplessness, he made up his mind to submit; resolving to shout an appeal to any passengers they might chance to meet.

Presently he found the horses put in motion; and himself riding on between the six. For some time, they proceeded thus; he hearing nothing all the time but the trampling of eight steeds. He tried to form some conjecture of the road they were taking, but there was nothing which could guide him to any definite conclusion. He thought the ground gave a soft and muffled sound occasionally, as they passed along, as if, at such times they were proceeding over turf; he fancied once or twice that he heard a bird singing; at another time he distinguished the lowing of cattle, and at another, the barking of a dog, all which made him believe that they were still in the country. No token could he perceive of passers-by, which confirmed him in the thought that they were conducting him through by-ways and unfrequented paths. Once he was aware that they passed close to some trees, for he could hear the rustling of the branches, as some of the party brushed by them. He could form but a vague idea of the progress of time; yet he guessed by the freshening of the air, and the coolness of shadow that seemed to fall upon him, that the sun had set. After what must have been a some hours' ride they came to a halt. He could feel that the horse he rode was checked by another hand than his own, laid upon the bridle-rein; then some food was held to his mouth, and the monosyllable, "Eat!" was pronounced. He listened keenly to the voice, that he might learn whether it was one known to him; but it struck him, even in the utterance of that single sound, to be a feigned one.

"I care not to eat;" he said.

A can was proffered at his lips, and the same voice exclaimed:— "Drink!"

"Nor to drink;" he rejoined. But he thought that this halt for refreshment betokened an inn; and he called out suddenly, and lustily, "Hallo! House! Within there! Is there any one at hand, willing to help a gentleman, betrayed by rascals?"

But no sound replied, save the echo of his own words, which rang loudly out, and then died away. Soon after, they resumed their journey; and soon after that, he felt his horse strain at the curb. The chevalier gave him his head; the animal stooped; and the chevalier could hear him drinking. They were crossing a ford, then. It suddenly occurred to him that they must have been coming round and round, over the same ground; for he thought he remembered the same thing having occurred, more than once before, since they set out. But the interval of time and distance between each recurrence of the ford, showed him that the space they must have traversed in their round—if round it were,—must be considerable. He took care to watch for this circumstance, carefully; and became convinced that they again returned to the same spot, where his horse, each time, made an attempt to stoop and drink. He could hear the peculiar sound, too, as the eight horses splashed through the shallow water—some brook probably, that crossed the road. He tried to recollect, if there were any such ford, in the part of the country about chateau Fadasse; but none could he remember. They must have travelled many miles, from the long time that seemed to have elapsed; when, at length, the whole party came once more to a halt. This time they all dismounted; and then, the six gathered about him, three on each side, and assisted him out of the saddle. He felt them lead him by the arms, up some steps; a door seemed to open; he found himself entering beneath a roof; he heard the door close behind him, some bolts drawn, a key turned in a lock, and other sounds of fastening, which fell heavily on his ear, as denoting incarceration. He prepared himself for some dark dungeon, or gloomy cell; for solitude, for bread and water, for all the usual horrors of captivity. What then was his surprise, when, the mask, stepping forward to unfasten the iron head-piece, enabled him to see the place in which he really was. His eyes, long blindfolded, could scarce encounter the blaze of light which burst upon them;

and at first he could distinguish nothing clearly in the excess of splendour which surrounded him. Gradually he could perceive that he was in a spacious apartment, hung entirely with rich silk hangings; at regular distances, chased silver sconces projected from the walls, bearing branches of wax-lights; a huge candelabra of the same metal, depended from the ceiling; a tripod of classical design, filled with flowers, stood beneath each sconce; and figures of sculptured marble, gleamed in snowy contrast against the deep crimson of the hangings, among which they were tastefully disposed, at set spaces from each other. In the centre of the apartment, stood a table, spread with delicacies. At one end, was placed a large chair; on either side, two others; and the table was laid with covers for three persons. As he observed this last circumstance, the chevalier Fadasse could not help wondering what sort of fellow-prisoners were to be his—if fellow-prisoners they were.

The masked man had withdrawn; but the six advanced, made some slight final arrangements in the disposal of the supper-table, and then stood waiting. There was a short pause. Then, a portion of the hangings at the other end of the room, was drawn aside, and disclosed a door (not the one—so it seemed to Fadasse—where he had entered), through which presently appeared two veiled ladies.

"O ho!" thought the chevalier, "a gallant adventure! That's quite another affair. I am now in my element. Fadasse, my dear fellow, thou art at home and at ease, now! See that thou carry'st thyself with thy usual address in such circumstances. Yet, poor sweet souls, I cannot but pity them when I think how small a share my heart can play in the attentions I offer them. That is devoted solely, in its faithful worship, to its sovereign queen, my Flora! But, pardie! I must not allow my becoming a married man to render me a boor. I must not let these dear creatures languish in the shade of my coldness and neglect. Allons!"

He approached the veiled figures, addressing them with some high-flown compliment. They each made him a profound curtsey; and then motioned him to take the head of the table, while they seated themselves on either side. He hastened to do the honors of the banquet, by

carving, and by helping each of the ladies to some of the dainties spread there in such tempting luxuriance; for he remembered that in eating, the veils must be raised; and he was dying with curiosity to behold the faces which must needs belong to such figures of grace and beauty. He passes to each, her plate, and she bows graciously, as it is placed before her. He watches them keenly. A small white hand is raised by the lady on his right; whom he distinguishes from the other, by observing that she is the taller of the two. The lady on his left also raises a fair hand; but in lieu of putting back their veils, they merely lift the plate from before them, and give it to the one of the six who is standing behind their respective chair.

"Fair ladies, you use me barbarously to decline eating with me You first deign me the beatitude of your presence, to cheer my solitary meal; and then you crush my enjoyment by disdaining to share it. Is this one of the bewitching but tormenting caprices of your sex, with which you are accustomed to rend and torture our too-susceptible hearts? 'Tis scarce hospitable. How may I know the cates are not poisoned, if you forbear to taste them?"

At a signal from the lady on his right, one of the six—who seem automatons rather than men, so like machines do they move and act—places another cover at the opposite end of the table; sets a chair; disappears for a moment; and then returns, bringing back with him the masked man, who takes the seat opposite to Fadasse, bowing low, and laying his hand on his heart. The chevalier can no longer complain of any lack of zeal in the performance of the part of tester. The newcomer fulfils his office with such right good will, that he swallows enough for three—the ladies, and himself.

He also goes through all the duties of hospitality,—even of joviality,—with great diligence, though in dumb-show. He pledges the chevalier with evident (though silent) cordiality, when he drinks, which is not seldom, or in stinted draughts. He passes towards him the bottle, with earnest (though mute) signs that he should help himself. He recommends various dishes to the guest, not by uttered words, but by unutterable relish on his own part; and by an active example, even more

than by significant and courteous gesture, presses him to partake of the good things before them. He lolls back, after the meal, with an easy air of satisfied repletion; seems to be meditating, in a careless, pick-tooth kind of way, and now and then, while playing with a little dessert-fruit, has the air of interchanging some light after-dinner remark, so perfect is the pantomime with which he plays his part of entertainer.

There is something in this self-possessed enactment of the host, on the part of the mask, which the chevalier feels to be peculiarly provoking. He frets beneath the assumption of equality,—nay of superiority, which it indicates. He winces at the unwarranted freedoms, as he thinks them, which this kind of behaviour permits. He has more than once tried to frown them down; but resentment against silent insults is difficult to evince; there is something almost ridiculous in its display, and the greater the endeavour to mark it, the more absurd it becomes.

Fadasse gave up the attempt, by resolving to take no more notice of them, or of the impertinent who chose to play them off. He addressed himself, therefore, once more, to the veiled ladies.

"Fair creatures," he said, "indeed you treat me ill. You set me down to a feast, it is true; but you deny me that which makes the charm of a feast,—festive intercourse; which gives zest to the viands, flavour to the wines! That magnate of the eastern story, who in a fit of fantastic humour, chose to try his guest's temper by a wordy vision of described dainties, in lieu of actual cates, was less tyrannous than my fair entertainers, who pamper my grosser appetite, while they starve my intellectual palate. Ladies endowed with wit such as doubtless adorns your speech, when you permit it to bless mortal ear, should not thus cruelly doom to famine your expectant listeners. Satisfy my impatient hearing no less generously than you have regaled my other senses. I have savoured delicious food, provided of your bounty; I behold yourselves, graceful and shapely; I touch this hand of cygnet-down——"

He was about to take the hand of the lady seated on his left, as he spoke these words, but she withdrew it.

"Nay, fair Cruelty, why so cold? I touch this hand of swan-like whiteness and softness," he resumed, attempting to take that of the lady on his right,—when one of the six stepped forward, and touched him on the arm, with a warning gesture.

"A strange household this!" he exclaimed, as he fell back in his chair, rebuked; and lifting a glass of wine to his lips to conceal his chagrin. "What companionship is there in silence? Call it churlishness rather. As well drink alone, as drain none but mutely-pledged wine-cups."

"You shall not deem us churls, sir chevalier;" said the mask. "Rather than you shall have just cause of complaint, in being compelled to the imbibing of unsocial draughts, myself will be your boon companion; a man, as it seemeth me, more fitly fills that office than a lady."

"And yet poets have told us ere now, that women and wine combine for man's delight;" said the chevalier.

"Trust me, they are but scurvy poets—rascal poetasters, rather—who desecrate beauty by associating its inspiration with that of the goblet;" said the mask.

"But Jove the omnipotent had the good taste to make the budding vernal Hebe his cup-bearer;" answered the chevalier.

"Jove, good sir, was Jove,—king of gods and men. It behoves us petty mortals take heed how we rashly challenge comparison with the Thunderer, or ape his doings. Moreover, sir, bully Jove repaired his uncourteous blunder, by taking Tros's son to be his tapster, when he saw his error of turning the goddess of Spring into a barmaid."

Fadasse recognized the mask's voice for the same as that which had uttered the two monosyllables during his blindfold journey. It still struck him as being a feigned one. There was, besides, somewhat singularly perplexing to him in the tones of this voice. They seemed an echo of something that perpetually mocked his endeavour to retrace where, or under what circumstances, he had heard it. They were suggestive of something subordinate; something that ought perforce to be deferential and respectful; and which, therefore, the more vexatiously grated upon

his ear in the inflections which it now assumed of ease and familiar equality. He felt galled and embarrassed, each time they sounded; but he strove to preserve his appearance of imperturbability.

"May I crave your worship's name, since you favor me with your converse, sir?" rejoined the chevalier.

"Far be it from me to limit your desires, sir;" replied the mask. "Crave, as much as you please. But permit me to give you this warning. There are certain things here, which you may have a wish to question; but to which you may chance to receive no replies."

"Is your worship's name among the forbidden enquiries, pray?" said Fadasse.

"Sir, had you duly noted my words, you would have perceived that in the matter of demand, there was no prescription. You are at full liberty to ask what you think fit; but whether the satisfaction of answers will be yours, is yet an unsolved problem."

"May one know if your own name is to remain a mystery?" persisted the chevalier.

"It is one of those mysteries that may not only be fathomed by your profundity, but may be revealed by my willingness to gratify your curiosity. Know me, sir chevalier, for your friend, Pierre La Touche."

There was nothing in this name that reminded Fadasse of any one he had ever known.

"Good monsieur Pierre La Touche," he said, "I am beholden to your courtesy. May I farther own myself its debtor, by your informing me the names of these fair ladies?"

"I would fain oblige you, sir. But, for all that regards those fair enigmas," said the mask, bowing, and placing his hand on his heart, "I must refer you solely to themselves. What they will vouchsafe for your contentment, I know not. But whatever it be, it must come of their own unurged goodness; it must be conferred of their own free and bounteous will."

"I am but too glad to derive my hope of favor from so promising a source;" said the chevalier, with an insinuating look towards each of the

veiled ladies. "I cannot fear I shall languish long, when I look upon these feminine forms. A tender heart must belong to such exterior softness."

"You see those women, and fear no protracted holding of tongues, I ween;" said the mask. "You build,—as most men do, in their views upon the sex,—on their soft hearts, and love of talk. Sad betrayers, both, of poor maidens. But we shall find how long silence will prevail, where a whim of will holds natural inclination in subjection. It remains to be seen whether Will, or Speech,—both so dear to female heart,—shall conquer. Meantime, sir chevalier, these ladies take their leave; wishing you, as I myself do, the complacent dreams, such a gentleman must needs enjoy. Good night, and fair rest t'ye, sir."

"Fair Cruelty, fair Rigour," said the chevalier, bowing to the ladies as they rose from table, "for so must I distinguish you, until you deign to acquaint me with your truer, because softer, names. I wish you the undisturbed sleep, which may not be mine while you remain inflexible to my prayers."

The two veiled ladies made a profound reverence; and withdrew, through the small door at the farther end of the apartment, followed by the mask, and four of the six automatons. The two, who remained, lifted up the hangings opposite, and discovered another door, which they threw open; inviting him, by a gesture, to enter. He did so, and found a luxurious sleeping-apartment, no less superbly hung and adorned, than the saloon where he had supped. He was sufficiently wearied by his long ride, to hail the prospect of repose with eagerness; so that he devoted but half the usual time to his night-toilette; which it was his custom to perform with the scrupulous care of a fop.

He slept long and soundly. When he awoke, he was surprised to see the moon-like lamps with which the bed-chamber was hung, still burning. He felt refreshed and wakeful, and had all the sensations of one who has slept for many hours; yet no sign of morning could he discern; so, believing that he must have been mistaken in the lapse of time, he turned round and went to sleep again. It was but a short doze. He felt that he had slept long enough,—that it was time to get up,—that it must be morning.

"I forgot those thick hangings; they exclude the light, doubtless;" thought he, as he leaped out of bed, and drew back the heavy crimson drapery. There was a window-space; but no window, visible; the shutters were closely shut and fastened. He endeavoured to undo the fastenings; but they resisted all his efforts. He went to another window, but with no better success. He hastily opened the door which led into the other apartment; but found the same blaze of light there, as when he had first entered it. The sconces had been replenished with wax-candles; and the candelabra that hung from the centre of the ceiling, also. He drew back a portion of the hangings in one of the spaces between the flower-bearing tripods. There was a window; but close-shuttered and fastened. He found another, and still another; but all were alike impervious to the day-light, and impossible to undo. He tried to find the door, through which the ladies had made their appearance. He found it readily; but it was fast locked. He searched for the one through which he thought he himself must have entered; and which seemed to be at the other end of the saloon. He found that likewise; but it was immov ably barred and bolted.

He noticed that the table had been cleared of the previous meal; and that it was now laid as if for breakfast. He observed, too, that it was laid but for one person.

"Corbleau!" he exclaimed, "they intend carrying on this farce of disdain yet awhile longer. 'Tis a shallow pretence, a poor affectation that cannot deceive me. Why should they have brought me hither? Is it not clear they affect me? Why, then, delay avowing what is so evident? But 'tis like the silly vanity of the sex,—the palfrey of power, of which they are so fond. Allons! Let us indulge the sweet souls with their fancied supremacy; 'twill not last long. Let us be tolerant of their weaknesses, which after all, have their peculiar advantages for us gallants."

Smiling, and confident, he went through the rites of morning-toilette; taking, if possible, more than ordinary care in the adornment of his person. When he once more came forth into the saloon, the six automatons entered, bringing hot chocolate and other such requisites for ma-

king the first meal of the day, as were at that time almost exclusively confined to royalty, or the highest nobility.

He was assiduously waited upon, while at table, by the six; whom he did not fail to interrogate, with the endeavour to elicit something that might enlighten him on the subject of his present position; but their wooden, expressionless faces, let him say what he would, made it a matter of doubt whether they might not be deaf and dumb, instead of only voluntarily the latter.

After breakfast, they cleared the table, and withdrew.

The chevalier was seized with a fit of yawning. He cast his eyes round the room, wishing that among its rich adornments, mirrors had not been omitted. He strolled into the bed-room, and amused himself for a time with the toilette-glass; examining his tongue; twisting and coaxing his whiskers; smoothing his moustaches; paring and trimming his nails, rearranging his rings and other ornaments. But even the most interesting employments will pall, at last; and he sauntered back into the saloon. In one corner, to his great joy, he found a merelle-table, a chess-board, dice, and a pack of cards. In a recess opposite, a lute, a viola, a viol-de-gamba, and a few other musical instruments. With these he entertained himself for some hours; until, just as he was beginning to think it must be dinner time, in came the six, and began to spread the centre table.

In this manner, he now went on. He could form no idea of the lapse of time. He had not the slightest notion whether he might not be, in fact, taking his noontide meal at set of sun, breakfasting in the dead of night, or supping at day-break. He only knew that his different refections were served at about the same intervals from each other; after he had himself regulated his breakfast-hour by coming forth dressed for the day from his sleeping room. Whether the moon and stars were then shining, and making night glorious; or whether the sun were high in the heavens, shedding its golden beams through the blue sky, and lighting up all earth with its splendor, he had not the remotest means of judging. The same blaze of wax-lights from the candelabra and sconces in the saloon; the same tempered radiance from the lamps, in the sleeping-

room, kept him in total darkness,—as to the progress of time. Once, a sudden light, (of conjecture) broke upon him.

"Aha!" thought he, "my kidnapping and bringing hither was not enough; my detention here was not sufficient! It is requisite that I should be kept in ignorance of the passing of time, that I may not know when the thirtieth of the month arrives; that I may be absent, lost, nowhere to be found, on that day; that I may be made involuntarily to break my engagement with Raoul on that day; that I may not be married to his sister, in short, on that day! Pardie! The pretty rogues have laid their plans well! But which one of them is it, I marvel, who has so set her heart upon having me? I would give this diamond solitaire to know! Is it my fair Rigour, that tall, graceful beauty, whose eyes shoot perilous sparkles of light, e'en through the thickness of her veil? Or can it be that sweet little dove, my fair Cruelty? For after all,—they cannot both wed me. One has doubtless, for the sake of the other, generously sacrificed her own passion. Or perhaps they wait but until the fatal day which was to have seen me lost to them for ever, shall have safely passed, and then they will leave to myself the decision between the two; the rejected one content to yield me to her rival sister, though not to a stranger. For sisters they must be. How else could woman's love,—mutual woman's love—be found firm and true enough for so fearful a sacrifice? Dear souls! It racks my heart to be constrained to grieve them by a knowledge of the truth. But it must be told. However painful the task, I will be ingenuous; and tell them, I can never make any woman my wife but Flora de Beaupré. I will not, to spare theirs, break her heart. She has a right to my faith; it was first given to her. I will not drive her to distraction by forfeiting my word to her. They are fascinating creatures, 'tis true; still I cannot be false to my poor little Flora, even for their sakes. Methinks, I long to see them again, if it be but to disabuse them of their fatal error."

But many breakfasts, many dinners, and many suppers succeeded to each other, ere his wish was gratified of seeing covers laid for more than one. At length, he perceived that the six prepared the supper-table,—

or what, by its order of meal-succession, should be the supper,—for three persons. As on his first arrival,—a chair was set for him in the place of honor, and one on either side.

As before, also, after a pause, the two veiled ladies made their appearance through the same small door; and, with a profound curtsey to the chevalier Fadasse, took their seats at the table, while they entreated him, by a courteous gesture, to take his.

"Fair ladies," he began, "I am far too happy in this gracious return of yours, to greet it with a reproach. Otherwise I might, perhaps, with justice, accuse you of a too-cruel austerity, in having thus left me to pine so long for the delectation of your presence. But I taste it now. We will suffer nothing to mar its perfect enjoyment. Let me help you to some of this exquisite-looking dish; 'tis wild-fowl of some kind, daintily held captive in savoury jelly, and needs no condiment to aid its own surpassing relish, I warrant me. Or to some of this farced peacock? The garnish of its natural plumage, so glowing, so beauteous, imparteth an air of longing to fly towards the plates of those so worthy in beauty to give it acceptance." The ladies bowed; received what he carved for them; then gave their plates to the attendants to be carried away.

"Still implacable? Still relentless? Can I never hope to win a word,—a smile? May I never look to soften those obdurate hearts? Will they never accord me the grace of avowing, what I may venture to guess, from acts that have spoken, perhaps, eloquently enough? Will not those lips confess the sweet secret? Will they not let me have the bliss of knowing from themselves that which has been so flatteringly and convincingly owned, in the fact of my spiriting hither? Will they not let me see them in their ruby loveliness aver, that which has already been spoken in deed? Will they not let me hear their soft accents murmur confirmation of my happy fortune? Will they not let me thank them, as only rightly they can be thanked, for their gentle yielding?"

In the eagerness of his suit, the chevalier had extended his hand towards the veil of the lady on his right; but a touch on the arm from one of the six, warned him not to proceed.

"Foi de gentilhomme, this is pleasant!" he exclaimed, petulantly. "You bring me hither, ladies, to play the gallant, and then forbid me the use of my tongue, by resolutely holding yours; and deprive me of the use of my limbs by those confounded living wooden statues of yours, who rap me on the arm if I do but so much as offer to take your hand. You have me carried off, as Hylas was borne away by the enamoured river-nymphs: you secrete me here, with all loving cherishment; and then would fain have me believe that you care not a jot for me, by all this killing coldness of behaviour. You teach me your kind meaning by capturing me; you warm me into rapturous hope by having me seized and brought hither; but you waywardly repress all expression of my passion, by this chilling and inviolable silence on your own parts. Surely this is beyond the licensed privilege of feminine caprice."

He observed that the lady on his left hung her head a little; and thinking she was duly abashed at the justice of his remonstrance, he resumed.

"Come;" he said, in a less captious tone, "I will not be severe in my animadversions upon the foibles of the dear sex. You shall have your fantasy of wilfulness out. You shall maintain your chariness of speech, your frigid reserve and distance. But you cannot hinder me from drawing my own conclusions from the one fact of my seizure and inprisonment by you. It is but right, however, that you should be informed of one thing in return. It is grievous to me to be compelled to give fair ones like yourselves the pain of knowing your love is placed on one who never can return it in honorable kind. But I must be frank. I can marry neither of you. I am promised, bound to another; and to her I must preserve my fidelity."

Both the ladies gave unmistakeable evidence of being violently shaken by emotion of some kind. He thought them weeping; and hastened to console them.

"Sweet creatures," he said; "believe me, it gives me anguish to afflict your gentle hearts thus; but I deemed it due to my own honor, and to yours, that you should be made aware of this fact. Now, if

contrary to all prudence, you rashly persevere to love me,—the peril be on your own heads; I can say no more."

The ladies drew forth their handkerchiefs; and beneath their veils, the chevalier could perceive them wiping away the irrepressible tears.

"My heart is saddened, oppressed, by the sight of your grief, lovely ones!" he said; "would that it were in my power to assuage it! But Fate has willed otherwise! Take courage, dear ladies! Be comforted. Believe that I pity, though I cannot marry you!"

The two ladies abruptly arose; cast themselves for a moment into each other's arms; and withdrew in a burst of uncontrollable agitation.

"Poor souls! Poor dear souls!" he murmured compassionately. "My heart bleeds to behold their agony. But it was my duty; and I have performed it. Let that be my consolation." He helped himself to a glass of Tokay, and drank it off; gave a deep sigh; poured out another glassful: and after swallowing that, ejaculated:—"Allons! we must resign ourselves! I suppose, now that they know there is no hope of marriage, they will release me. Had they not persevered in keeping me at that chilling distance,—given me that proud silence in return for all my eloquence of pleading, and nought but avoidance for all my tender advances, I could, perhaps, have been content to have idled away some time longer here, in pleasant dalliance with these fair enslavers; but as it is, I will now hope that I may be detained no longer from the fulfilment of my promise to Raoul and the beautiful Flora. I trust I may yet be in time. I wonder what the day of the month is?"

The next time he was conscious of thinking, he was wondering what the hour was. The wax-lights were burning low. The six were busily employed clearing the supper-table. He found he had been dosing in his chair. Once more murmuring "Allons! we must resign ourselves!" he made his way to the sleeping-apartment.

But many more breakfasts, dinners, suppers, followed each other in succession ere he was gratified in his hope of release. At length, after one of these breakfasts, just as he was about to engage in a game at merelles, with as much of excitement and entertainment as could be

derived from a match against himself, he saw the mask enter, accompanied by the six; who, as usual, looked like wooden figures moving on springs.

"Ah, my worthy Pierre La Touche, welcome!" exclaimed the chevalier. "'Tis dull work, playing alone. I shall be right glad of thee for an opposite. Come, take thy seat; arrange thy men. I hear the savage British islanders have a rustic imitation of this, our gallic game of merelles; wherein they mark lines on the ground, for a board; have paltry pebbles, in lieu of our neat pieces; and give this, their bungling simulation of our sport, the title of nine men's morris. Hast thou heard of this Boorland version of a gentlemanly recreation?"

"Not I, sir chevalier;" replied the mask. "My conversation and intercourse lie but little 'mongst clods. My tastes lead me to herd with my fellows. As it is the nature of sheep and goats to flock and follow,—and of bulls and deer to scorn mingling with baser cattle, so doth the cavalier of refinement, disdaining the company of rude clowns, consort solely with his kind. But my present business is not with nine men, or nine gentlemen, but with one, even with yourself, sir chevalier;" added he, stepping briskly forward, and placing the iron blindfolding once more over Fadasse's head.

He felt the six gather round him. He heard the door unbarred and unbolted. He found himself led forward.

"Stay, good Pierre la Touche!" he exclaimed; "I would fain bid farewell to those veiled beauties, ere I quit their enchanted palace,—as I opine I am about to do,—for ever. Lead me to them—Let them know I am being torn from them—Let me assure them that I leave, even more unwillingly, than I came hither."

But without any heed to his exclamations, the six hurried him on; mounted him; got into their own saddles; and soon the whole party were riding in the same order as formerly.

There was the same long journey; the same indistinct traces of its being performed round and round in a given space of some considerable extent; and, at length, came the halt, the dismounting, and the final withdrawing of the iron head-piece.

The chevalier Fadasse looked hastily round. He was in his own grounds again; on the exact spot where he had been walking when these men first accosted him. They were now scouring off, with the led horse upon which he had himself ridden, between them. Last, went the mask, bringing up the rear of the party.

"Villian Pierre! Rascal mask! Scoundrel La Touche!" shouted the infuriated chevalier; "be assured I shall live to have my revenge of thee for this foul trick!"

"I have already lived to have mine for the one thou play'dst me, master Fadasse, once upon a time, for many a long day together!" laughed the mask, in his natural tone, as he scampered away; and was soon, with his companions, out of sight among the trees.

"Peste!" cried the chevalier, "'tis no other than that truant imp, the old jester's son! Who should have dreamed of his turning up again at Chateau Fadasse? I was in the mind, more than once, that I knew some of those pert tones. A murrain on the varlet's impudence! To treat me, his old master's son, forsooth, with such airs of equality. But who can those ladies be, in whose service he hath employment? The mischief is in it, when two roguish women, and a discarded page-jester and knave, set their heads together to outwit one! Malédiction!"

He bit his lip, and stood plunged in vexed meditation. The scene, the hour, were precisely similar to those when he had last been here. The afternoon shadows fell all as sunnily upon the gravel-walks; the water in the marble basin shone clear and still as before; the leaves and blossoms of the orchard were rich and bright-coloured as ever; but where were the glowing and complacent thoughts that filled the chevalier's fancy on the former occasion? Vague feelings of resentment,—of moody anger,—of baffled will, possessed him now. He stood there the conscious victim of some knavish trick, some arch piece of dupery, expressly played off to make game of, and torment him.

A serving-man crossed the court, and approached the orchard.

"Hallo! Sirrah Jacquot! Come hither!"

"My young master!"

The servant was about to hurry away again, to carry the news of the

chevalier's return to his father, the baron; when Fadasse called him back. "Before another word, tell me what day of the month it is;" he said.

"Good lack, master! Why, the fifth, sure."

"The fifth! Then the thirtieth is past and gone!"

"The thirtieth! Of course it is;—of last month."

The chevalier Fadasse uttered an imprecation; but stayed to question no more. He hurried to his stable; bade one of the grooms saddle his horse; mounted, and rode off at full speed in the direction of La Vallée.

It was many miles' distance; and he did not arrive at the mansion until too late an hour to seek an interview with Raoul. There was no house of entertainment near; but he was spent with fatigue, and felt that he must seek rest and a roof at all events; and if possible, food. He approached a cottage, which he imagined must belong to one of the Beaupré tenantry. He found it to be a sort of lodge to the park; and, fortunately for him, was inhabited by an old woman, not inclined to be hospitable, but communicative. She told him that the great house was all in confusion; that there had been a many worrits there, lately. That first there had been a terrible 'tripotage' about mademoiselle Flora, who had vowed, poor lamb, not to marry some rich abomination of a man whom her tyrant brother had insisted upon her having, instead of that charming monsieur Victor, whom everybody loved, as well as mademoiselle Flora. That then her 'villian loup' of a brother had shut her up in the turret-room, swearing a horrible oath that she should not be let out until the 'abomination' of a 'prétendu' came to marry her. That the 'poor lamb' had pined and pined in her solitary confinement; while all the time, preparations were making for her sacrifice at the altar. That the chapel had been re-decorated; the saloons newly hung; the house generally made gay, against the expected wedding. That as each day brought the one fixed for the nuptials more near, the young count de Beaupré had been heard to express fresh impatience and wonder at the non-arrival of the bridegroom. That at length the fated thirtieth had dawned: but still no bridegroom,—that is, no 'abomination' of a bridegroom. But in his stead, who should make his appearance but Victor St. An-

dré the first lover, come to claim his betrothed wife. That then certain facts had transpired. How that Raoul's oath had specified a clause, in favour of which, Flora, if not wedded on the last day of the month to the "abomination," was free to marry him to whom she had been originally promised. That the 'loup' full of sullen ire against the truant 'abomination' had given a grim consent to the nuptials of his sister with the man of her choice, and that they had actually taken place on the very same day which was to have seen the 'poor lamb' united to the detested 'prétendu.

The chevalier had contrived hitherto to conceal the personal interest he took in this narrative; but at the last fatal piece of intelligence he muttered a deep curse.

The old crone, who was rather deaf, and did not comprehend the import of his exclamation, went on to say, that the young couple were no sooner joined, than they were separated; for that immediately after the ceremony, Victor St. André had been compelled to quit his new-made wife. He had obtained leave of absence from his regiment but for a few hours; that he had travelled without drawing bridle-rein, to be at La Vallée at the requisite point of time; and that it was all he could do to be back with the army in time for an engagement which was forthwith expected to take place with the enemy. The young officer had only received leave of absence from his general, for these few precious hours; and now, his honor demanded his immediate return. He went, leaving the 'poor lamb' still within the power of the 'villain loup' of a brother; for the young husband had not even time to remove his Flora to the protection of their own house. All Victor could do, was to beseech Raoul to remember that she was his orphan sister, until such time as he himself could return to claim her as his wedded wife.

But it seems that no sooner was Victor St. André gone again, than Raoul resumed his old tyranny. There had been nothing but a succession of 'tripotages' since, the old woman said. Nothing but recrimination and reproach on the one side; with tears, and wringing of hands, and swooning, on the other. Until at length, on that very yesterday, it was discovered that mademoiselle Flora, 'poor lamb,' had strayed; she

was missing, was nowhere to be found, was lost, was gone. She had fled from her brother's house, no one knew whither; and Raoul, half in rage, half in affright, had taken horse, and set off from La Vallée to seek her.

"Then the count de Beaupré is no longer here?" enquired the chevalier. He had to repeat his question, before he could make the old woman understand what he asked; and then, finding that it was indeed too true, and that neither Raoul nor Flora were now at La Vallée, he resolved to stay no longer. He took his departure even yet more deeply mortified than he had arrived. He now saw plainly that he had been made the object of a well-concerted scheme to keep him out of the way until the period of Raoul's rash vow should have elapsed; thus affording an opportunity to Flora of effecting the only means of escape in her power.

Piqued at her evident disinclination for himself, which the whole affair discovered, he was the less wounded by the loss of the young lady; but his pride could not endure this defeat; he was enraged, too, that the brother had it in his power to reproach him with his failure in appearing on the day appointed, even though this non-appearance was involuntary. His self-love revolted from the humiliation of having to vindicate himself to Raoul; who would probably disbelieve the whole story of his kidnapping and detention.

He resolved therefore, that he would altogether avoid the vexatious reminiscence of these late circumstances, by leaving the scene of their occurrence for a time; and accordingly set out upon a journey of some months into Spain, to try what travel and change of scene would do towards obliterating the memory of these mortifications.

Rosalind and Celia were spending a pleasant season of retirement at Beaulieu. The former little thought she was so near the spot chosen by her father for his place of exile. She had not yet learned, that it was in the forest of Arden he had withdrawn with his faithful friends; that in the very cave where he had once in happy youthful days with his lost

wife. laid sportive plans for a future hermitage. he had found safe shelter in the present storm of his fortunes; that in the very scenes where he had once strayed with her in gaiety of hope which nothing yet had chilled, he was now acquiring the cheerful philosophy and resignation of spirit which should best enable him to endure her loss as but a temporary earthly separation.

His daughter, all unconscious of his vicinity. was. as usual. happy in the companionship and perfect love that subsisted between her cousin Celia and herself; and. one bright spring morning, at this time. the two were pacing up and down the broad terrace-walk of Beaulieu, thus conversing:—

"Ay, 'tis all well ended, so far;" said Celia. "Flora's hasty letter brought me word that the marriage had happily and surely taken place; that she was, beyond all fear, the wife of him she loved. But this compelled separation from her young husband—now her proper protector; this inevitable return to the guardianship of her unnatural brother, fills me with fears for her. Matrimony. in tales we read. is ever the happy ending; but in poor Flora's case, I fear me. 'tis but the commencement of fresh troubles."

"In tale-telling. the false rogues of writers would fain have us believe wedlock is the blissful goal;" replied Rosalind; "if we are to credit realities. 'tis too frequently the prelude of care. Well for Flora. that her troubles commence not where a wife would least have them spring,—from her husband. The young couple can scarce pick conjugal quarrels, apart as they are."

"Absence ofttimes breeds anxiety and doubt; which can scarce arise between two who truly love each other. when together;' said Celia. "But we will not meet cares half way. Time enough to consider how they may best be provided for, when they arrive. and we are forced to house them. I will not suffer myself to dread ill-usage for her, from Raoul. He will not dare mal-treat her. sure. now she is a wife. and beyond the lawful pale of his authority. Let us rather content ourselves that she is safe married to the man she prefers, and safe from marriage with the man she abhors."

"'Abhor,' is a strong word;" said Rosalind, laughingly; "yet 'tis scarce too strong to speak the feeling aroused in a woman's heart 'gainst such a self-sufficient fribble as Fadasse. How chivalrously he sought to protect us from our own weak hearts! How generous his compassion for our love-sick grief! How tender his considerations for our disappointment. What a noble self abnegation did he display towards his enamoured captors; and with what disinterested candour did he not break to us the groundlessness of our hope. But I would wager aught that should not imperil mine honor, that had the two veiled fair ones, not kept him at such arm's length as they did—he would have indulged their foible for his sweet person, though he chose not to give either of them a wedding-ring right to its exclusive possession. Out upon the conceited coxcomb!"

"My sport in the device was, to see how the fool had the wit to pay off old scores, by treating his former tyrant as his puppet;" said Celia. "Touchstone as the masked man, matched the chevalier for making him, as a boy, his foot-ball."

As Celia finished speaking, she found herself suddenly in the arms of some one, who clasped her close, and imprinted several kisses, in rapid succession, upon her lips.

She struggled to free herself; and to her indignation perceived that it was a strange youth, who had burst from a thick pleached arbour at one end of the terrace, and whom, at first, she did not recognize.

"How now, young sir!—What ruffian behaviour is this?" she exclaimed.

Rosalind said laughingly:—"Do you not know him, coz? Do you not perceive it is Theodore, Flora's cousin?"

"I know not how that entitles him to accost me thus—I should rather say, to assail me thus; said Celia, with a sparkling eye, and a tone that showed she was much hurt and offended.

"Cast thy glance upon him once more, ere thou pour forth all the vials of thy virtuous wrath upon the poor youth's head;" said Rosalind, still laughing.—"See here, what think'st thou of this, as a warrant for the innocence of his assault?"

Celia saw her cousin draw down from among the short black clusters of hair which peeped beneath Theodore's broad hat, a long bright golden ringlet. Rosalind drew it to its full shining length, in a sort of smiling triumph of proof; then let it go; and as it sprung up from her finger and thumb, in a wavy elastic curl against its owner's glowing cheek, it proclaimed that owner a very woman,—Flora de Beaupré herself.

"Dear Flora! you here! in this dress? How came you hither? How came Rose to know of your presence—of your disguise?"

"I contrived to let her into my secret first, in order that we might try its effect upon you securely. For it is of all importance that my disguise should be unsuspected, as I am about to take shelter with you, until my husband returns to take me to my future home."

"With what a pretty air of wifely pride doth she talk of 'my husband,' and 'my future home!'" said Celia, looking at her with a loving smile.

"But will you harbour me till I can claim them with as open a pride, as I now may show to you alone, dear friends?" said the blushing Flora.

"You know how right willing we shall be to have you with us;" answered they.

"I do know it; and in this happy confidence, I made my plans. I will not tell you how cruelly I was made to feel that I could no more abide under the roof where I was born. Suffice it that I felt I no longer possessed a brother in one who seems to lose all natural affection in his rage of thwarted power. I bethought me of taking refuge with you; but I knew that your father, Celia, might object to his daughter openly receiving a runaway sister. Could I conceal my identity for a time, and remain with you quietly here at Beaulieu, where I learned you were staying, I might be safe until Victor's return. I therefore provided myself with one of my cousin's suits; stained my eyebrows black; and by good fortune found a peruke of the same hue, which had once at a masked ball, served my mother. Thus disguised, I stole from La Valleé under shadow of night; made my way across the country,

through bye-ways, and least-frequented paths; and this morning, without a single misadventure, reached Beaulieu in safety. I was fortunate enough to stumble on your faithful follower, Touchstone (whom I had determined to take into my secret, knowing that it would be fruitless to attempt concealment from his sharp eyes); him I begged to take my message to Rosalind, who came to me, welcomed me warmly, and afterwards stationed me in this close arbour, whence I might steal out as Theodore, and take you by surprise in the graceless style I did. Forgive me the alarm I caused your modesty, in consideration of the assurance it gives us, that my disguise is beyond suspicion perfect."

"Thou art a dear fellow; and as proof I forgive thee thy saucy attack, I give thee this embrace of my own accord;" said Celia, giving Flora a hearty hug as she spoke.

"How will your ladyship's father take it, if he chance to see you clasping a young gallant about in that free fashion?" said the voice of Touchstone, who came up at this instant.

"My father! What say'st thou? What mean'st thou, sirrah?"

"I say that he is here. I mean that he is arrived. I saw his grace's coach enter the great gates of the park but even now; and hastened hither to acquaint your ladyship thereof. It is high time for timely warning when a woman's arms are wrapt round manly doublet, and father or husband approaches."

"Dear Flora, what shall be done? Will you risk meeting my father's eye?"

"I have no fear; I have complete faith in my disguise, since I have proved upon you its efficacy of deceiving. Besides, the likeness between my cousin and myself is well known. Present me to the duke as Theodore, and all is safe."

The experiment proved completely successful. Duke Frederick spent a day or two at Beaulieu; with no other thought than that the youth he found there on a visit to his daughter and niece, was Theodore de Beaupré, whom they had formerly known when they were all children together at La Valleé.

On his return to court, the duke found Raoul awaiting an interview

with him. The young count came to ask whether any tidings of his sister had reached her friends, Rosalind and Celia; as he had immediately suspected that she would seek protection of them. But duke Frederick, with the utmost confidence in the truth of what he asserted, assured him that they knew nothing of Flora's whereabout. He was going to add, that Theodore had returned from Rome for a holiday-visit to France; and that he had grown into a tall stripling, with the same remarkable resemblance between him and his cousin Flora, which had formerly been apparent; but remembering that the lad had fallen into Raoul's displeasure, by his abrupt departure, some years ago, from La Vallée, the duke refrained from mentioning the circumstance of his being now at Beaulieu.

There, the three ladies spent some pleasant time together. Flora would have been quite happy with her young friends; had it not been for her anxiety respecting Victor, of whom she heard no direct tidings. Rumours of continually recurring engagements between the two armies, occasionally reached her retreat; but no certain news.

Her friends sought to cheer her, by hopeful prognostics; but she could not altogether forget her fears for his safety.

"'If he should be wounded,' madam?" repeated Touchstone one day, overhearing her murmured expression of dread least such a chance should befal; "if he should, why, more shame for him not to have been crouching in a ditch. Serve him right, I say, for his folly. A man's a fool to become a soldier at all; but a thrice double fool, not to duck when bullets are flying about him, and blows are aimed at his head. Wisdom knows better. Bravery's little better than foolery, believe me."

"Thou speak'st foolery, like a fool as thou art, fool;" said Rosalind. "She would not have her husband other than the brave man he is, for all her coward speech."

"The fool speaks according to his nature, lady; well if all wise people did the like. Folly and light talking are as becoming in cap and bells,

as learning from philosophic lip. 'Tis a trick of prate, both. But the jester's art cometh the nearer to nature, being mother-wit."

"Thou confound'st wisdom with learning, fool. Wisdom is as truly the offspring of mother-wit as jesting."

"Nay, madam, 'tis your schoolmen confound them, not I. The bookman who crams his brain with the musty thoughts of others, claims credit for them, as though fresh-born of his own pia mater. He chews the cud of other men's fancies, and reproduces them with the grave visage, and solemn complacency of a ruminating cow. 'Tis ever the craft of pedantry to confound erudition with knowledge. No duller dullards than your pretenders to wisdom."

"Pretenders of all kinds are wearisome, fool. Pretension, ever-straining, and full of effort, must needs tire itself and others. But true wisdom,—like genuine mirth, like all things true and genuine,—is always fresh and welcome."

"Yonder comes a pretender of one kind,—a pretender to virtue. One that makes a sour-faced scarecrow of sweet-visaged virtue, by her own crabbed pretensions to be its votary. How will she be welcome to your ladyships?"

"Tis madame de Villefort, Rose;" said Celia. "Let us go in and receive her. I see they are ushering her into the saloon."

Their visitor proved to be the lady in question. The marquise de Villefort was a rich widow, whose estate adjoined the Beaulieu grounds. In right of country neighbourship, she instituted a kind of inquisitorial visiting acquaintance with the young princesses, Rosalind and Celia; and in right of her reputation for strict virtue, she contrived to make her visits as odious as possible. She was always critical; always censorious; full of animadversion upon others; had an ever-crammed budget of misconduct to tell; was never without a supply of news, slanderous, detractive, mysterious, calumnious, conveyed in inuendo and affected commiseration.

She was so over-good, that she made goodness hateful. She was so fastidious and scrupulous, that she made scruples an impertinence. She was so oppressively virtuous, that she made virtue a bugbear. In short,

the marquise de Villefort was a prude. Many a coquette by nature is a prude by circumstance. Her advances are slighted, and she takes refuge in receding. Not encouraged to be forward, she revenges her own want of charms, and the insensibility of mankind, by being ultra-backward. She haply owes her immaculacy to a plain set of features; but unwilling to derive it from so mortifying a source, she gives it a voluntary air by repulsive manners. Her homeliness preserves her from solicitation; but by demure conduct, she hopes to have it thought that only, which keeps wooers at a distance. Nature has made her looks forbidding in a personal sense; she hopes by art to make them seem forbidding in a moral sense. She is unattractive in herself; but in order to screen this, she assumes unattractive behaviour, that admiration may appear repressed, not unyielded.

This prudish widow had a pet dog, that she always carried about in her arms; and on him she lavished those caresses which she was supposed to withhold from mankind. She would frequently expatiate on the intimacies to which she admitted this canine favourite, while they were denied to his human brethren, with a minuteness and an emphasis, that had anything but the severe delicacy which she fancied herself pourtraying. She would often declare that Cher-ami alone should share her couch; while no second husband might ever hope to win her to another espousal. She would press her lips to the muzzle of the little animal, fondle him against her bosom, and let him lie for hours on her lap; while she held forth on the inflexibility with which she should frown away all presumers to her hand. This lady it was, who now came to pay a neighbourly visit at Beaulieu. She entered the saloon, bearing Cher-ami, as usual, curled within one of her arms, just as Rosalind, Celia, and Flora, approached from the terrace, coming in through one of the windows that opened on to the ground.

A fair morning to you, young ladies, and to you, young sir. I see you are still at Beaulieu. How comes it that your studio in Rome allows of so protracted an absence? Will not art languish, while you are giving your time—I will not say idling your time—here, with these fascinating princesses? Beware they do not bewitch you into an utter oblivion of your vowed mistress—Painting."

Flora addressed some suitable reply, in her character of Theodore, and by a well-turned compliment to the widow herself, contrived to divert her attention from the subject she had chosen for discussion.

"What do you think I have heard, sweet ladies," said the marquise, turning to Rosalind and Celia, "concerning that young gentleman in whom you took some interest, I think, on account of his marrying a friend of yours. I speak of Victor St. André. It is said, that he is in high favor with his general officer; not only on account of his gallant behaviour in the late actions against the enemy, but from the assiduous court he is paying to the general's daughter. She is an only child, a rich heiress, and no bad 'partie' for a young lieutenant; but it is really scandalous behaviour in Victor to pay attentions to this young creature, when he is already a married man. He perhaps considers himself hardly such; for I have heard—you can tell me if it be true—that he was compelled to leave his bride at the very altar. A bride and a wife are very different personages; and after all, men allow themselves strange license; still, I think he cannot venture either to befool the general's daughter, or to betray the young lady between whom and himself a legal ceremony has certainly taken place."

"Victor St. André will never do anything unworthy, I dare avouch, madame la marquise;" said Rosalind firmly.

"It is impossible to conjecture what young men will attempt;" returned the marquise; "their principles are, alas, too often sadly lax on such points. They take a latitude of privilege, that we poor women dream not of. He may not be able to resist the temptation of a match with one who is reported to be lovely, wealthy, and not insensible to his merits; and moreover, an alliance with whom will at once secure his military promotion. But tell me, my dear, did he, as it is said, quit his scarce-married wife in the very hour of their nuptials? This point makes an important distinction in the view I take of his conduct. I am, I will own it, perhaps over-nice in my notions of what is due to feminine honor."

"Over-niceness allows itself to pry into matters that simple modesty leaves unapproached, even in thought;" replied Rosalind. "But jealous

as I am for my friend Flora's honor and happiness, I will not believe, for an instant, that they are imperiled by having been committed to the keeping of Victor St. André. He is her husband, madam, and will never act otherwise than consistently with that character."

"My dear princess, you are warm;" said the marquise, charmed to find that she had excited a sensation by her news. "I see your cousin has so taken to heart these tidings of Victor's treachery——"

"Treachery, madam! Is it thus you stigmatize a man's acts, on a mere idle rumour, that has doubtless exaggerated a passing courtesy to his general's child, into an offer of marriage?"

"My dear, I trust it will prove so. I only know that he was seen bearing her in his arms to a litter that was waiting in a sheltered lane, one evening; and that she seemed nowise averse to be so supported. But all this is hearsay, probably. Pray be easy; I dare say all is as it should be. Only, I was about to say, your cousin seems to be so much affected by these reports of her young friend's husband having forgotten the ties that bind him already, that she has withdrawn. And leaning upon the arm of that youth, too. I must caution you, my dear, as a friend to your cousin, that if she wish to avoid having awkward conclusions drawn from the familiarity with which she treats that young fellow, she should keep him at greater distance."

"Never fear, madam. Celia regards Theodore for her friend Flora's sake. You may have perhaps heard that he is madame St. André's cousin; and the poor youth was doubtless affected by what he heard you tell of the whispers which have gone forth concerning her husband's alledged inconstancy."

"Now I think of it, the young gentleman's cheek did grow pale as I went on. He even seemed much agitated as your cousin led him away; but still I think she consults not her own dignity in taking so evident an interest in master Theodore's uneasiness. Tell her so, from me, my dear, as a friend who feels a sincere anxiety for the unspotted preservation of her good name."

"I will not fail, madame la marquise; though I have no fear but that my Celia's own unprompted delicacy will suffice. Ay, even in spite of

evil tongues that are ever busy; and of misconstruction and misrepresentation, that are ever on the alert;" said Rosalind, as the marquise de Villefort rose to take leave.

The prude's morning tattle had done its pernicious work. Flora was very miserable. This poor young creature had been brought up in such complete subjection, that it had made her diffident of her own merits. She could not help attaching some credence to this tale of Victor's having forgotten her, in the dazzling prospect of a union with a young, beautiful, rich girl, the daughter of his general, and who, it seems, was not indifferent to him. She secretly fretted; accusing herself of a too-credulous vanity, in allowing it to persuade her that she could seriously attach such a man as Victor St. André. But she rallied, before her friends; she affected false spirits; she assumed the indifference of resentment; she tried to speak as if she felt only a growing coolness towards him, in return for his neglect of her. Rosalind and Celia were not deceived by this show of braving it, on her part; they saw her feverish suffering through her apparent gaiety; they knew her to be deeply wounded beneath this exterior unconcern; they knew her assumption of spirit to be but a courageous attempt to dissemble how much she was inwardly hurt; but until they could give her the only effectual consolation, that of knowing Victor to be still true, and unswerving in his faith, they let her carry it off thus with seeming indignation.

"I would he could obtain leave of absence, were it but for a day;" said Celia once. "Could you but see each other—could you but hear him explain this, as he doubtless can, to your satisfaction, all would yet be well."

"Why should I see him? I desire not to see him." Flora's trembling voice belied her words, as she uttered this treason against the love that lay hidden in her heart—"Why should I listen to explanations, which he, like the rest of his sex, is well able, no doubt, to pour forth at will, in the most plausible style, to the beguiling of us poor credulous fools of women."

"Beware how you let your anger make you unjust as well as bitter, dear Flora;" said Celia. "Think if you can recall one instance where-

in Victor spoke otherwise than truly, acted otherwise than nobly. We should judge friends in absence by what we know of them, not by what we hear of them."

"He had the gift of seeming true and noble; but how know I, he was what he seemed?" said Flora, with a vain struggle to speak without faltering.

"Here are some unseemly drops gemming your worship's vest;" said Rosalind, pointing to the tears which fell fast and thick upon the front of Theodore's doublet. "What, man! let not your woman's eyes rain their own betrayal."

"They are tears of anger, not of weakness. Do not think they spring from a tenderness unworthy of a forsaken wife. I am no spaniel to fawn on him who spurns me; I cannot crouch to a reluctant affection. If Victor desire to forget me, I will show that I can forget him. Why should he come to renew the tie between us, if he have wished it broken. Why should he return to excuse and explain? I would not see him—I would not hear him—I could not bear to have him frame shallow pretexts, utter hollow assurances, aver and protest a thousand untruths. It would break my heart."

"I doubt it not—were he to do so—but I do not think he would. He would speak nothing but truth; plead nought but right."

"He cannot; he cannot. Right and truth are his no longer;" said Flora in vehement agitation; then mastering it, by an effort, she added decisively, "I would not see Victor so degrade himself. I would not see him, if he came hither."

Touchstone had more than once heard madame St. André express herself thus peremptorily on the subject of declining to see her husband should he come to Beaulieu. He had his own secret opinion on the matter; but he felt bound to abide by her avouched determination. This it was, doubtless, which made him act as he did, one evening, when as he was crossing the park, at some distance from the house, he chanced to meet the very gentleman in question,—Victor St. André.

"Hist! good fellow! Hear me!" called Victor aloud, as he saw the jester turn away into another path, as if he had not seen him.

"Whom call'st thou fellow, pray?" replied Touchstone. "I would have thee to know I hold fellowship with no strangers. I give not my countenance so easily, as to let a man call me one of his brotherhood, until I know him to be a true man. Prove me your claim to the title, ere you name me anything but Touchstone, which is my rightful style and denomination."

"I would have thy kind offices, good Touchstone, to lead me where I may speak with thy ladies, the two princesses. My business is urgent, and will not bear delay. Test me this gold, good Touchstone. Prove its value, by accepting it."

"Sir," said Touchstone, drawing back, "I am bribe-proof; although a namesake of the transformed Battus."

"Is that a hint to double it? Battus, thou know'st, yielded to the second offer."

"When the silly old shepherd of Pylos gave way at the instance of him who filched the flocks of Admetus, he knew not his man. But I have a shrewd suspicion of mine. I take it, you are no disguised god-head, like the sly Hermes; though you may well be one of his disciples —a thief, sir."

"How sirrah?"

"You steal hither in the night, sir; or, to speak more accurately,— in the dusk; is not that the act of a thief? You would rob me of mine honor, by proffering a bribe which shall induce the betrayal of trust; doth not that prove you a thief? I find you furtively, fraudfully, stealthily, surreptitiously—not to say, burglariously, seeking to effect an entrance into a dwelling-house against the owner's will; is not that the proceeding of a thief? Truly, I think you are no better than one of those said Mercury's minions."

"I'll tell thee what, fellow; lying as well as thieving is, I believe, among their attributes. But as I am a gentleman and no thief, a true man and no liar, I lie not, when I promise to break thy head, an' thou do not my bidding."

"Marry, sir, that promise shall hardly suffice. An' bribes could not succeed with me, threats shall not; and where gold failed, the tempting offer of a broken head shall scarce prevail. I scorn propitiation. Give ye good night, sir. Sleep where you will, you house not here."

Turning on his heel, Touchstone left the spot, and went straight to the saloon where he knew the two princesses were sitting, with their friend, the seeming Theodore. They had deferred having the tapers of the sconces illumined, that they might luxuriate as long as might be, in the delicious air of evening, and its softened light. The windows that opened on to the terrace were all set wide, and commanded a lovely view over the trees and lawns of the extensive park. A crescent moon was just rising; its silver line clearly defined against the tender azure of the sky, which was still tinged with the last faint lingering golden and roseate hues of sunset; and a few stars twinkling forth, lent their diamond sheen to the mild radiance of the whole scene.

"You should see, dear friends, how firmly I would behave," Flora was saying, as Touchstone enterd the room; "I would not betray myself, were he close beside me. Until not a doubt remained upon my mind that his love has never wavered. I would not let him guess how foolishly faithful, how weakly strong, my affection has been, and still is, for him. His very presence should not shake me from this resolve."

"The meaning of that, is this.—which though no rule in grammar, is a good phrase in logic;" said Touchstone stepping forward. "Your meaning is, as I understand it, sir madam, that you would be adamant, in case your husband besought you to hear him. 'Tis well that I forbade him the house, when he would fain have paid you a visit but now."

"How say'st thou? 'But now!' Hast thou seen him, good fellow?" gasped Flora.

"A goodly adamantine aspen-leaf;" cried Celia laying her hand upon the trembling Flora's sleeve; "but sit thee down in yonder corner, and recall some of thy firm resolves, to harden thee against aught that may bechance."

"Victor here! you jest, man;" said Rosalind to Touchstone.

"As a jester should, madam."

"Nay, nay, leave thy quips now, and let us have sober verity."

But just as he was about to tell her how he had met Victor St. André in the park, he saw the figure of the gentleman himself appear on the terrace; and pointing to it, he said:—"In sober verity, then, he is here. Behold him!"

Rosalind signed to Touchstone to be gone, while she herself approached one of the open windows.

The figure came onwards; and seeing the lady, hastened his steps towards her.

"This is what I hoped;" he said, as he raised his hat, and advanced to address her. "I hoped that I might be able to find my way to your presence unguided, since guidance was denied me. I beseech you to believe that I should not have used this scant ceremonial in approaching you, had not my state absolutely required secresy. With the hardly-wrung sanction, or rather, with the connivance of my general officer, I have stolen hither to obtain if possible, traces of my Flora. A rumour suddenly reached me that she has quitted La Vallée, and the protection of her brother; that she has fled, no one knows whither. You, dear lady, who are one of the two friends dearest to her, can surely inform me if this terrible news be true."

"It is but too true;" said Rosalind. "I pray you, walk in, sir, and let us speak of this farther. My cousin Celia and I have been sitting here in the twilight, with a young friend of ours, until we forgot, in the interest of our talk, which was on this very theme, to order that the wax-tapers should be lighted; but by your leave, we can continue our converse by starlight, rather than have the interruption of the attendants."

"It best suits my condition, which must shun curious eyes, while I am a deserter from my post;" replied he. "But in pity to my anxiety, lady, let me know all you know of my Flora—my wife."

"Why did you not stay to see after your wife yourself, good sir, instead of leaving the task of caring for her to others." said a person who had hitherto remained somewhat in the shadow of the apartment.

"That voice!" exclaimed Victor in sudden amazement.

"Ay, that voice, good sir; the voice of Theodore; which probably strikes upon your conscience, from its likeness to that of his cousin, the woman whom you, with so much of the insensibility ascribed to a husband, left, after an hour's marriage. You must be gifted with more than the usual amount of conjugal indifference, if you found time to tire of her in that short space."

Victor gazed upon the youthful figure which stood there. The faint light fell upon the same face and form which had once before so powerfully impressed him with their resemblance to those of her he loved. There was the same transparent beauty of complexion; contradicted by the pencilled jet eyebrows, and the short thick raven clusters of hair. There were the same vibrating tones, so like hers in their fulness and sweetness; but mingled with a pert, peremptory inflection, that brought to mind the querulous sadness of the boy's accents, who had accosted him that morning on the skirts of his own domain.

"I remember you, now;" he said, with a deep drawn breath; "you are the lad whom I met on your road to Rome, are you not?"

"'Tis of a piece with the rest of your delicacy towards our family, to remind me of the service you then did me;" replied the youth. "But I trust I shall live to requite it—to repay the money you then lent me. I disdain to live under obligation to one who has behaved to my cousin—my poor Flora, as you have done."

"You know not how little there was of slight in my leaving her when I did, young sir;" said Victor. "You would not have had her the wife of a recreant soldier—a dishonored man—which she must have been, had I tarried one hour longer away from the army at that perilous moment. I loved her honor, which was then become involved in the preservation of mine own, even better than herself."

"And truly your love for herself can be but of sorry quality, when we learn that it hath melted away in the fire of a newer liking;" said Theodore.

"My love for my wife can never melt in heat of liking for any other woman; and can only be extinguished by death itself;" said Victor firmly. "I forgive your rude questioning of myself, for the sake of the

affection it denotes towards her; and I answer for that reason with more patience than I otherwise might."

"How doth your assertion of love for my cousin, agree with the attentions you are now reported to be paying to your general's daughter?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Victor; "so that silly tale hath reached you, hath it? On the eve of one of our engagements, the young lady you speak of, came rashly near the field, to enquire of her father's welfare. He, in the very moment of giving directions for the attack, sent me with his message of entreaty that she would retire from her dangerous vicinity, and also bade me leave no arguments unurged which might prevail with her to obey his desire. A litter was in readiness; and after much eagerness of solicitation on my part, she yielded, and permitted me to convey her to it, that she might return home. This interview, I afterwards learned, was misinterpreted by some chance witnesses; and the general and I have had more than one laugh, since, at the absurd credulity which gave to a simple entreaty that a lady would remove from danger, the significant importance of a love-scene. The general is about to unite his daughter to a gentleman of birth and virtue. He knows well that I am married. Nay, it is because of his sympathy with my present anxiety respecting my wife, that he has given me tacit permission to absent myself from the army while there is no immediate prospect of an engagement with the enemy. But, alas, if she have indeed fled from La Vallée, how may I trace her?"

"How know you that she would have you trace her? How know you that your desertion may not have extinguished love in her heart for you? Mayhap, in the absence of the neglectful husband, some brisker gallant hath found the way to persuade her to bestow upon him, that which Victor de Beaupré held not worth the having."

"But that your voice, uttering my name, moves me in mine own despite, I would not tamely hear you speak thus lightly of her:" said Victor St. André.

"Peradventure, her flight is in company with this gallant, whosoever he may be. Why not seek them, and assert your conjugal claim? By prior right she is yours, you know. Why should you care whether her heart hath strayed irretrievably, so you recover herself?"

"Were it possible she had so swerved, and become the fallen thing your words describe, I would not hear you utter them:" said Victor. "But being as she is, I firmly believe, the soul of unspotted truth and honor, wherever she may be—and however fatally lost for a time—you shall not malign her unpunished. Come forth into the park with me, young sir; these ladies shall not protect you by their presence, from the chastisement due to so shameless a tongue. Whatever advantage your youth and unequal height may be supposed to give me, will be made up to you in the disarming power of your voice. I am unmanned while I hear it."

"You would fain have me believe you feel the echo of her voice, yet you would kill her cousin because he tells you your own desertion has made her a false wife."

"I will fight even with that face—these eyes—those lips—if they couple falseness with her name!" exclaimed Victor, passing his hand across his eyes for an instant, as if to shut out the sight of what caused him such deep, such bewildering emotion. Then, in a sort of fierce rallying of his determination, he half drew his sword, repeating "Come! Follow me, young sir!"

But at the first glimpse of the blade, the seeming Theodore sprang forward, and clinging to his arm, exclaimed—"Don't hurt me, Victor!"

"Coward, as well as slanderer?" he cried, and was about to push the youth off; when Rosalind stepped forward, twitched away the black clusters of hair, and revealed the fair ringlets of Flora, exclaiming:—

"Have a care, master Victor, lest in your roughness to Theodore, you injure Flora!"

"Flora! my wife!"

"Victor! dear husband!"

"Let us leave this foolish pair to fight out the rest of their quarrel, after their own fashion;" said Rosalind, leading Celia away. "Clubs won't part them now."

"Ay, marry; they're close engaged;" replied she. "But, certes, their fair encounter needs neither umpire nor witnesses; so have with you, coz."

On the following morning, the happy party of four friends were all walking on the terrace together; Victor trying to assert his marital authority, in forbidding his wife to think of carrying out a resolution she had formed, of accompanying him to the army as his page, rather than again be separated from him.

"Help me, sweet ladies;" he said, to Rosalind and Celia; "help me to persuade this dear unreasonable against so wild a project. She knows not the risk of 'noyance that would be hers; she dreams not the difficulties, the perils, she would have to encounter, in so hazardous a position. I speak not merely of personal dangers,—her wife-errantry might give her courage to confront those; but of the perils to her modesty, to her nice sense of propriety, which such a situation would entail. Besides, how could her husband perform his duty as a soldier, with so fruitful a source of alarm ever at his side? The thought of her, and of her thousand perils, would make a coward of his heart, and take all virtue from his sword."

"You bid her prove herself a worthy wife, rather than a fond wife; —a hard task for a young wife, but one, which if she be a wise wife, she will learn early, that she may ever after be a happy wife;" said Rosalind.

"Theodore shall stay with his friends at Beaulieu:" said Celia; "until such time as Flora's husband can fetch her to St. André; though to say sooth, I hardly know whether I shift not some of those perils to modesty you talk of, from your wife's hazard, to mine own; for my reputation hath already run some risks, I fear, in the favor shown to this pretty youth. His welcome here,—the intimacy between us,—hath given scandal occasion to hold a fan before her brazen face, and to whisper a malicious aside. But I am content to abide the issue, if Theodore will still give us his company."

"Scandal would be content to hold her tongue, I fancy, could she but change the object of Theodore's intimacy; her malice would be discreetly dumb, were he to offer his gallantries to herself instead of to you, coz;" said Rosalind.

"Oh, I know whereabouts you are! Poor madame la marquis;!

She is your impersonation of scandal, with her lifted brows, and pursed lips;" said Celia.

Flora laughed. "I could find it in my heart to avenge the heart-ache she gave me by her despiteful story of my husband's inconstancy. I've a shrewd notion you are right; and that Theodore would have little difficulty in thawing the prude's icy punctilio. Betake yourself to your defences, madame de Villefort, for the youth hath a mind to try his bonne fortune."

"Cry you mercy, good folk! take me with you, I beseech you, or I am left darkling;" said Victor St. André. "Of whom are you speaking? Who is this marquise de Villefort? and how doth her name affect my Flora?"

"Nay, she nowise affecteth Flora; but we are much mistook, if she affect not Theodore passing well;" said Rosalind. "She hath thrown glances of favour on him—furtive, but manifold. She grudges his attentions to others; she hath fifty pretty feints to engage them towards herself. She passes bickering comment on his deeds and words, in the company of others; but she makes amends by casting him sweet eyeliads when no one is looking. She twits and gibes his youth; but contrives to let him see she thinks him a very pretty fellow; she sometimes praises, sometimes makes a mock of his beardless bashfulness, thereby letting him understand that a little more saucy enterprise in his manner would not only be becoming, but welcome. She laughs at his shyness, and rallyingly commends his diffidence, showing that forwardness would be encouraged, as well as forgiven. She pretends to censure his awkwardness, while she lets him know and feel that in her eyes he is never amiss."

"I plead guilty to the truth of all this, on the part of madame la marquise;" said the laughing Flora. "Should I not succeed, think you, were Theodore to attempt giving her a lesson in return for the pang she caused your poor little wife?"

"No doubt of it, from what I hear; and I dare say she richly deserves that you should stay and read her such a lesson;" replied Victor.

"Ah! 'Stay!' That is what I cannot bear to do, since you must go!" said Flora; all her smiles fading away at the thought.

Just then, a man on horseback, whose uniform proclaimed him an aide-de camp, rode up the park approach, towards the house; but seeing the group on the terrace, he made his way across the sward in their direction.

"It is a soldier! He has seen you, Victor! We are lost!" said Flora.

"Fear nothing, love; I told the general where he might hear of me, in case he should desire to summon me—to communicate with me."

Flora's cheek grew paler and paler, as she saw the horseman deliver into her husband's hand the missive which was to call him from her; but she strove to be collected and firm, while eagerly perusing his face, as he read the letter.

To her surprise she saw joy sparkle in his eyes.

"Dear Flora! See here! Read this!" he exclaimed. "We need not part. Henceforth, my honor, my duty, are one with my delight. They alike call me to my home with you"

The general's letter congratulated Victor on an amnesty which had just been ratified between the long-contending armies. He bade him take his new-made wife in triumph to St. André; and there joyfully to celebrate the proclaimed peace, by proving himself as good and happy a citizen in this period of the realm's tranquillity, as he had hitherto shown himself to be a brave and faithful champion in its time of war.

Rosalind and Celia were in the midst of offering their felicitations, when a visitor was announced.—madame la marquise de Villefort.

"We will attend her in the saloon;" said Celia, to the attendant. "Or rather tell madame la marquise, we are with some friends on the terrace, if she will do us the favor to join us here."

"Now, master Theodore," said Rosalind, "muster all your forces. The lady is at hand, upon whom you are to try the courage of your impudence. Let it not fail you, for the love of true modesty. Her pride of prudery deserves a fall."

Flora was so elate, so full of glee at the news she had just heard, that she could not by possibility have been in better humour for the gay task proposed. She played her part so well; she led the widow

into such bewildering belief of her being struck with her; she entangled her in such a maze of banter, compliment, playfulness, adulation; she so thoroughly impressed her with the notion of Theodore's enamoured fancy, and desperate liking, that the prude was fairly bewitched,—enchanted,—charmed out of all her artificial frigidity, into the coquetry natural to her. She was trapped into seductive looks; betrayed into alluring words; her freezing reserve unconsciously melted into blandishment; her malice merged into kindness; her sarcasms became covert flattery; and her usual severity was insensibly exchanged for the most captivating softness. Her scruples were foregone; she lost sight of all her reserve. The strict decorum exacted from others, she forgot to observe, when she herself became the object of admiration; the rigid adherence to propriety, so often insisted on in judging imprudent women, she left unheeded, when there was a pressing suitor in her own case. The rapture of finding that this youth was dazzled by her beauty, blinded her completely; and his simulated passion proved an irresistible bait to her vanity. The conventional prude stood confessed the native coquette.

Rosalind, Celia, and Victor, quietly enjoyed this comedy, played off for their amusement by Flora; they felt no compunction for the object of the plot, since she merited her unmasking.

Towards the end of her lengthened visit, the marquise had admired some beautiful exotics, which filled a vase standing on the table of the saloon, whither they had adjourned from the terrace.

"They are gathered from a plant, which my father's indulgence has placed in the conservatory here, for me;" said Celia. "I will send your ladyship a branch of them, since your taste so approves them."

"Sweet princess, I am greatly beholden to your courtesy. But whom will you find, worthy to be their bearer? Such flowers as these, should have none other than hands of highest desert, and nicest charge;" said the widow, looking full at Theodore. "No hireling page is fit to be entrusted with them. It should be some gentleman, whose refinement and good taste would ensure their safe conveyance."

"I am sure my friend Victor St. André would have great pleasure in bringing them for your ladyship to Villefort;" said Celia demurely.

"Rather call him your cousin's friend;" replied the marquise with emphasis, though sinking her voice to a half whisper. The princess Rosalind is really unblushing in the display of her preference for monsieur St. André. You would do well to advise her, as a friend, to be more guarded in her conduct. So open a show of liking for a young man, is scarce seeming, in a young maiden of her years and rank. Her own dignity demands greater discretion. But to return to the flowers. If you yourself, my dear, can spare that other young gentleman from his perhaps imprudently close attendance on your steps, I would ask you to let him bring over your kind gift to Villefort. 'Twill give the youth consequence, you know, poor lad, to find himself the trusted envoy between two ladies."

"It will be received by him as valued encouragement, I doubt not, madam;" said Celia, with a smile.

"Jealous, poor little thing!" thought the marquise.

When madame de Villefort took her leave, Rosalind, Celia, Victor, and Theodore, all bore her company through the park, as far as the great gates, where she said her coach was awaiting her.

Theodore and she, by mutual contrivance, kept side by side; and as the party strolled on beneath the trees, these two gradually fell into such exclusive interchange of words and looks, that the others lingered some way behind, leaving them to themselves.

"I overheard your charming arrangement with the princess Celia, that I should be the favored bearer of your flowers;" said Theodore to the marquise, with an animated look of gratitude and delight. "I could not misconstrue its generous condescension—its flattering import. Thus let me thank my goddess;" and the youth raised her hand to his lips. "You intoxicate me with your goodness; you transport me with your gracious indulgence; do you indeed select me to bring those flowers to your house—to come to Villefort—to visit you—and alone? You will receive me alone?" And Theodore acted the insinuating wooer with his eyes, to perfection.

"These youths are so foolishly explicit;" muttered the widow. Then she added aloud, with a tender glance:—"Come; and trust to my

friendship for you. I want to have your counsel respecting the best mode of arranging the princess's gift. So come early, that we may have daylight for our task, in the disposal of the flowers."

"So marked a proof of confidence from your ladyship, deserves equal trust on mine. I will tell you a secret, madame la marquise; one that concerns my future existence,—on which depends my very being. Have I your permission to reveal it?"

"Can I not perhaps guess it?" murmured the widow, with a languishing look.

"I think not; you will never suspect me of having taken such a daring advantage of your kindness,—your encouragement."

"Nay, speak out;" said the marquise, with a smile as unlike the forbidding austerity she had taught her lip to assume for its general wear, as a ripe cherry is to a wilted crab-apple.

"Thus emboldened," stammered the blushing, but roguish-eyed Theodore, "I find courage to own to you that I am not what I seem; that I am,—that, in short,—I am—a—a—woman!"

"A woman!" exclaimed the widow, with a gasping shriek.

"Ay, madam, at your ladyship's service;" said Flora, doffing her broad hat, and with it the mass of short black hair; so that her own fair curls fell around her face, and down upon her shoulders, while she glanced into the prude's face with those smiling rogue's eyes of hers. "Command me in aught that can avail you. I would bring the flowers over to Villefort this evening—but I have an engagement to go with my husband to St. André. Nay, he should have brought the flowers, and enacted the part of your ladyship's adviser, which he would doubtless have filled with far abler grace than Theodore, poor youth; but, I know not. 'Men allow themselves strange licence,' you know. I, as his wife, you, as a severely virtuous lady, will think it best, perhaps, that he should keep his duty-appointment at St. André, instead of the pleasure-engagement,—the assignation, which you vouchsafed to me."

"Assignation? Insolent! I know not what you mean, madam;" said the marquise, as she flung from her, and advanced to step into her carriage, which by this time they had nearly reached.

"Of course not, madam;" replied Flora. "None are so conveniently at a loss to discern a meaning, as you ladies of quick apprehension. Your squeamish purity sees a latent sense of evil in simplest words and deeds; but becomes dull as ignorance, where it suits you to understand nothing. Farewell, madame la marquise! Commend me to Cher-ami; and may his innocent slaver continue to compensate you for the despised caresses of false men, and still falser youths!"

When their friends Victor and Flora quitted them for St. André, Rosalind and Celia also left Beaulieu, and returned to court.

About this time, Rosalind had her thoughts much drawn again towards her father. She learned where he had taken up his abode; she found it was the pleasant forest of Arden that he had chosen to make the scene of his exile; she heard of the cheerful philosophy, the happy serenity which had become his, in this charming spot; she heard how he drew inspiriting lessons from everything that surrounded him in this woodland life of peace and contentment. She heard too, that many more of his friends had lately joined him; that several lords had voluntarily banished themselves to bear him company. His faithful cousin Amiens was, of course, still with him. All this was of sweet comfort to her; and yet she could not but occasionally suffer her heart to sink a little, as she felt the natural longing of a child to be with her father, that she might give him her loving care, cheer him with her company, and make him and herself happy in their mutual affection.

Her uncle treated her very kindly; although his feelings towards her were of a mingled complexion. He loved her for her own sake; he could appreciate her brilliant qualities; he knew how much they added to the lustre of his court; and he was therefore anxious to retain them there; he also liked her for his daughter's sake, who he knew tendered her no less dearly than her very self: but in addition to these favorable sentiments with which he regarded her, there lurked, besides, certain misgivings with respect to the place she held in popular esteem; a sort of jealousy of the people's commendation of her many virtues and ex-

cellences, and a kind of uneasy association of her presence with the injustice she had done her absent father. Nevertheless, the prepossession had hitherto prevailed over the distrust; which lay smothered, in self-unconscious existence, until some occasion might arise which should call it forth into an open evidence of displeasure against her.

The friendship between herself and Celia, had even increased with their growth, and strengthened with their added years. It had acquired the maturity and solidity of better knowledge of each other; and together with this higher appreciation of the qualities of either had come a truer acquaintance with their own capabilities of loving. They were sisters in heart. Celia, in her generosity of soul, saw that in Rosalind's mind, which she delighted in, as something she gladly confessed superior to her own powers of wit and fancy; while Rosalind beheld in the affectionate gentleness of Celia's nature, that which she reverenced as above even intellectual gifts. The perfection of feminine attachment was theirs.

But it was under the impress of a passing shadow of regret concerning her father, that Rosalind, one day, seeming less gay than was her wont, caused Celia to say:—"*I pray thee, sweet my coz, be merry.*"

To which Rosalind answered:—"*Dear Celia, I show more mirth than I am mistress of; and would you yet I were merrier? Unless you could teach me to forget a banished father, you must not learn me how to remember any extraordinary pleasure.*"

And now this story ceases, that it may have its proper termination in the play (be that, however, 'as you like it'!), and "end, in true delights."

FINIS.

TALE X.

JULIET; THE WHITE DOVE OF VERONA.

"She doth teach the torches to burn bright!
Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear:
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows."

Romeo and Juliet.

It was Lammas-eve. The breath of early August hung hot and sultry upon the scene. Not a leaf or a blossom stirred. The flowers in the garden, the fruit on the orchard-trees, yielded their incense to enrich its heavy-perfumed volume. The mingled scents of carnations, with their clove aroma; of fragrant jessamine, of delicious orange-blossom; the faint languor of lilies, the matchless luxuriance of roses, the honeyed sweetness of woodbine; together with the fruity opulence of peach, nectarine, and mulberry, the musky smell from fig-tree and vine, and the redolence of the grape-clusters themselves, exhaled a steam of spicery that seemed to add voluptuous weight to the torpid atmosphere, which hung close, oppressive, motionless; laden with odorous vapours. There was a hush, a pause, as of a mighty suspended breath. Within the Verona garden, on the branch of a pomegranate-tree,—deep-nestled amid its profusion of scarlet blossoms,—sat a pair of snow-white doves; their grain-like beaks joined in that close-wrestling kiss of their tribe, nearest allied in its pretty prerogative to the human caress.

All seemed preternaturally still. The sky looked dense, for all its glow of azure and golden light. There were masses of sullen clouds, in the horizon, purple, crimson, gorgeous and sluggish, amid copper and emerald-hued back-grounds; bright bars and edges of dazzling splendour, were crossed and interwoven with broad flushes of rose color, that stretched up athwart the heavens. The distant mountains looked of a deep violet; dark, yet sharply defined against the leaden murkiness of the sky, in the quarter away from the westering sun. There was a sinister beauty in all; in the rich colors of the firmament, as in the voluptuous stillness of the atmosphere.

Thunder muttered, low and remote, its solemn music; sternly tremulous, it seemed to usher in reluctant doom. A few heavy drops fell,—Nature's tears for fate decreed. As closed the beauty of this fair Italian summer evening in storm and devastation, so was to end the ill-starred pair of Italian lovers' brief joys, in despair, destruction, death. Yet, like the beauty of Italian summers, renewed with the returning sun, the love of those Italian lovers shall endure in immortal light, casting into shadow the transitory darkness of their early grave. So long as the sun of Italy and the world shall shine, Italy and the world will cherish the memory of that Italian love-story,—the love-story of the World.

Sudden, in the very midst of the slumberous pause, a vivid flash, accompanied by a burst of thunder, rent the air. The birds were smitten from the tree; their snowy feathers scattered to the ground; the rain poured forth its torrents; the trees bent and waved beneath the fury of the electric wind, which sprang up in abrupt and violent gusts, hurling all to and fro in agitation and tumult, where late had been naught but mute repose; the heads of the flowers were cast to the earth, smirched and torn; the leaves were swept from the boughs, and whirled away; the mould of the beds, the gravel of the paths, were snatched up by the violence of the rain; the lightning flung its scathing glare abroad and afar; and the thunder with scarce any intermission.

But at the moment the bolt fell, which struck the two white doves, a little human dove fluttered into existence,—drawing its first panting breath in this world of passionate emotion. Juliet was born.

The birth of this child was the subject of great rejoicing to the house of Capulet. Her father was, by direct descent, and by wealth, the chief representative of this one of Verona's most illustrious families. He had been anxious for an heir, to perpetuate its dignity; and though he was a little disappointed, when the child proved to be a girl, yet he consoled himself with an heiress rather than with no descendant at all; and moreover, he had the supplementary comfort at looking forward to a time, when, by the birth of a brother, the heiress's claims might yet devolve upon an heir.

The lord Capulet, when a young man, had busied himself rather with his own personal enjoyment of his birth-right, than with any care of its honor and dignity; far less, with any solicitude regarding the provision of a future successor to its rights and privileges. But as he advanced towards middle age, these considerations struck him in the light of a duty. He felt that it rested with him, as head of the house, to see that its state was maintained, that its influence and power among Verona's magnates was preserved undiminished; that its name should in nowise be suffered to risk decreasing estimation, decadence, or extinction. He could not conceal from himself, that his own course had hitherto been one little calculated to add to the repute of the noble name he bore. He knew that his career had been idle, dissolute; profitless to himself and to others; a mere pursuit of pleasure, without one serious consideration as to the sources whence pleasure can alone be truly derived. He had sought to steep himself in luxury, without a thought given to the securing of happiness; he had revelled in passing gratifications, to the utter neglect of a solid, a genuine, a permanent satisfaction. His mind was a void, for he had taken no pains to store it; his heart was a blank, for he had never cultivated its best emotions. He passed for a generous young man; for he had plenty of money, which he spent freely. He had never met with trouble or vexation to cross him; therefore he had the name of being a very good-natured young man. He was full of lively gossip, proficient in all the scandal of the day, versed in all the talk, the practice, the intrigue, of society; and of course was pronounced by society to be a most accomplished young man. He was, in fact, but a good-humoured voluptuary.

He had just awakened to something like a conviction that he ought to reform his way of life (perhaps he had become satiated with the futile husbandry, called sowing wild oats); that it was high time to settle down into a respectable personage; that it would be well to think of family honor, and marry; of the family name, and become a father; of the family dignity, and renounce his bachelor establishment; when these virtuous considerations were confirmed by the advent of an heir to another noble Veronese house, which had always rivalled his own in distinction. The birth of a son to the house of Montague, determined the chief of the house of Capulet to lose no time in wooing and wedding, that he also might have a legitimate successor to inherit his title and dignities. He was casting about in his thoughts who, of all the youthful fair ones of Verona, he should select for the honor of being his partner; when he received a summons from a dying friend, conjuring him to come and receive his parting breath, together with a sacred legacy he had to bequeath.

This friend was a gentleman of Ferrara, named Egidio. He had been a soldier of distinguished gallantry; and indeed, it was of a hurt, mortal, though lingering, received in his last battle, that he was now dying. The friendship between Capulet and the Ferrarese officer had originated in a service which the latter had rendered the former some years before, in Venice, on the occasion of a youthful frolic; when, in some night-brawl, Capulet had been surrounded by opponents, and might have fallen beneath their swords and poniards, but for the timely aid of the young soldier. Since then, the intimacy had been, at various times, renewed, as opportunity served; Egidio coming to Verona, whenever an interval in his military duties permitted his spending a season of gaiety there.

Of later years these visits had been rarer; and for some time previous to the final summons, Capulet had almost ceased to hear from his friend.

Now, however, he lost no time in hastening to him; shocked into gravity and reflection, at the thought of so soon beholding one,—whom he had never seen otherwise than in the height of health, hilarity, and enjoyment,—prostrate on a bed of death.

Subdued into this unwonted mood, he arrived at the house, to which he had been directed as his friend's abode. He was surprised to find it in so poor a quarter of the town; and still more surprised to find it one of the most mean-looking among the poor places there. He found that it was, in fact, a lodging house; for, on entering the room which opened into the street,—merely screened from it by a dingy curtain,—he saw a basket-maker, surrounded by his wife and family, just sitting down to their noontide meal of polenta. These good people answered his inquiries after his friend Egidio, by at first shaking their heads, as knowing no such person; but on his happening to drop something of his dying state, they exclaimed, "Ah, the poor sick gentleman—the wounded soldier—surely; he lodges here—su di sopra," added they, pointing up a rickety staircase, that led to the floor above.

Capulet, his heart sinking lower and lower, at each step he took, when he came to the top landing (it was but a single-storied house), paused to take breath; more from the oppression of sadness, than from the exertion of mounting. At length he mustered composure to knock softly at the door which presented itself. It was as softly opened. The half light which the interior of an Italian house always preserves during the principal hours of day, in careful exclusion of the outward glare, scarcely permitted Capulet to discern more than the general appearance of the figure that stood in the doorway, when opened.

It was that of a young girl, who, before Capulet could utter more than the few first words of his enquiry, exclaimed:—"Ah, you are the friend he expects—longs to see! Come, come to him; he feared he should never survive to speak to you, yet said he could not die until he had spoken to you. Oh, come, come!"

The girl, clasping her hands, and looking earnestly into his face, seemed to forget that she herself was the only delay to his advance, while she stood there imploring him to enter. But her whole manner was wild, and agitated, as if she were beside herself with alarm and anxiety.

Capulet attempted to speak a few soothing words; then whispered, "Lead me to him. Where is he?"

The young girl led Capulet into an inner room, where, on a miserable pallet, lay Egidio.

"My poor friend? Is it thus I see you again?" sobbed Capulet.

"I thought you would not fail me!" exclaimed the dying man. "And yet, friendships made in the spring of youthful gaiety and folly, endure not always through a season of sadness. But you are come! You are come! Let me look upon your face—let me assure myself you are here. Put back the curtain from the window, Angelica mia," added he, to the young girl, "that the light may fall full upon him; I cannot have the comfort too certainly, of knowing him to be here."

"You are exhausting yourself by talking;" said Capulet, as the haggard face of Egidio showed pale and ghastly in the stream of sunshine that was admitted, while the features worked with excitement, in eagerly perusing those of his friend. "Be composed. I am here; here for as long as you wish. Do not speak farther till you are better able to bear the exertion."

"That will never be—I am better able now, than I could have hoped. Let me tell you all I have to tell, while I have strength. Even this poor remnant may not be mine long."

He gasped, and sank back upon his pallet; while a passion of tears and sobs burst from the young girl. The dying man's eyes were bent mournfully upon her.

"'Tis of her I would speak—my poor Angelica—my child. It is the thought of leaving her alone in her young beauty to fight the rough fight with the world—ever ready to deal its hardest blows against the unprotected, the innocent, of her sex,—which makes it so bitter a thing to me to die;" said Egidio.

"My father!" was the broken exclamation of the sobbing girl, as she stood gazing upon him with clasped and outstretched hands, in the helpless bewildered agony of manner that had been hers throughout.

"I knew not that you had a daughter, my friend," said Capulet, looking upon her with sympathy, yet with a certain curiosity to see whether she possessed the amount of perilous beauty, her father had deplored. He could not help a passing thought of the partiality of a parent's love,

which will exaggerate into loveliness dangerous to its possessor, mere comeliness of youth, and a passable set of features.

It is true, that these latter were swollen and distorted by grief; her dark eyes were clouded; their long lashes were heavy and matted with tears; the lids were red and distended; there were two purple rings beneath, telling of distress of mind and body, both sorrow and want; the cheeks were wan and bleared with weeping; the lips were colorless; and the tall figure was not only bent, but gaunt, with watching and want of food. She looked the young girl, whose beauty, in the very spring of its developement,—when most needing fostering care to cherish it into the perfection proper to it,—was nipped and marred by misery.

A man of finer imagination, of a truer heart, of a nobler soul, of a higher nature than Capulet, might have seen something of what lay obscured from the superficial view of the man accustomed to judge of womanly beauty only as it is seen dressed for admiration, for meretricious display and allurement; but to his eyes she merely presented the image of an overgrown girl, with a face spoiled by crying, and a figure injured by hardship.

"It was one of my many weaknesses," said Egidio, in answer to Capulet's last words, "to keep you in ignorance of my marriage. I could not bear that you, the witness and sharer of so many of my bachelor freaks, should know that I was in fact a married man; that you, the partaker of so many of my youthful follies, should learn that I possessed the onerous ties—for then we affected to consider them such—of a wife and children. I could not endure that to you, in whose eyes I had always appeared the gay, free, unembarrassed young soldier, I should become known as, in reality, the man of cares, of impaired fortunes, the thoughtful husband, the anxious father."

Egidio paused, with a deep sigh, then resumed—"My wife was of an illustrious Bolognese family. I had met her in one of the campaigns produced by civil war in central Italy, which brought me into her vicinity; and knowing that her proud house would never sanction an alliance with a soldier of fortune, though of gentle birth, I found means to persuade her into a clandestine union. Her family never for-

gave the disgrace which they conceived she had brought upon them; and their inflexibility broke her heart. She bore unmurmuringly the change from her old life of distinction and luxury at Bologna, to a life of privation and obscurity at Ferrara,—for she loved her husband. But her gentle nature could not endure the severance from all ties of kindred and of former childhood home, and she visibly drooped and pined away."

Egidio again paused and attempted to wipe the gathering damps from his forehead; which his daughter perceiving, sprang forward, and bent over him, to aid his trembling hand.

"She left me with two children;" resumed the dying man, with a stern look settling upon his face; the elder has been a constant source of shame and misery to me. My son; he has, ever since he was of an age to know vice from virtue, been devoted to the pursuit of the former. His childhood was deceit; his boyhood was wild and reckless; his youth has been incessant profligacy. My slender resources have been drained to supply his excesses His home has been impoverished, and more than myself have frequently foregone a meal to furnish his spendthrift exaction; for we yielded all, in the hope of reclaiming him. In my daughter—my Angelica—I have had ever one pure source of comfort; it is only now, now that I must leave her exposed to all the harms of helpless youth and beauty—I feel bitterness mingle with my joy, my pride in her."

The father's face was convulsed, and he writhed in anguish, as he looked upon her; while hers was buried in her hands. Suddenly he turned again towards Capulet, and said:—"I must utter it—I must speak the hope in which I sent for you. My friend, it was the trust that your generous heart would not hesitate to bestow the sole comfort mine is capable of receiving, which made me entreat you to come hither and accept this sacred charge. Save her, my friend! Take her to your guardian care. Be her protector, her husband!"

"Marry her! She is a mere child! Would you have me marry her?" exclaimed Capulet.

"She is of gentle—nay of noble birth. Her mother's blood ran in

the veins of one of Bologna's proudest houses. My own descent no humbler. I know your generosity of soul too well to think that her poverty can be any obstacle. Her many virtues, let her father avouch, who has known them proved and tried, throughout her young but arduous life; of her beauty, your own eyes will tell you. his partiality does not speak too highly."

"The dying man turned his eyes fondly upon his child; who still stood absorbed in grief, hiding her face within her clasped hands.

At this moment the door of the apartment was softly pushed open, and a friar, whose garments spoke him to be of the Franciscan order came into the room.

His entrance aroused the young girl, who sprang forward to meet him, exclaiming:—"O welcome, good holy man! your advent always brings comfort to my dear father! Welcome, good father Ambrosio! Welcome!"

"Holy St. Francis be praised! I bring comfort indeed!" said the friar, advancing to the bedside of the dying man. "One of our brotherhood, just arrived from Bologna, brings tidings of the decease of your late wife's father, the count Agostino; who, it seems, in the hour of his death, rescinding the harsh sentence he had formerly uttered against her, pronounced a forgiving blessing on her memory, and acknowledged her issue as his grandchildren, and his joint heirs. Since all the rest of his descendants have, by a fatality, died off in the course of the last few years," continued father Ambrosio, "the inheritance of your son and daughter will be considerable. Cheerly, my son; let these good tidings give you health and strength, to revive."

"I am past revival, good father;" murmured Egidio; "but all the joy I can receive from your news, I heartily thank your goodness for."

"Render thy thanks where they are due, my son—to Heaven; that hath ordained things thus for comfort and blessing in thy parting hour;" said Ambrosio.

"Comfort and blessing, truly;" said Egidio, turning his dying eyes upon Capulet. "I may now offer to my generous friend's acceptance a

rich heiress, in lieu of a poor orphan; but, save in the article of worldly wealth, she is scarce more a treasure than before; her own worth is her best dower. Give us your help, holy father; that I may see my child safe-bestowed on my dearest friend. Reach me thy hand, my Angelica. Weep not, my girl; thy father is about to yield thee to the loving custody of one who will be hardly less fond than he himself has been. Thy hand, also, my friend; and now, good father Ambrosio, do us thine office in making man and wife of these two dearest to my heart."

Capulet, superficial, unreflective, tolerably good-humoured, and easy-dispositioned,—from a dislike of the trouble of opposing, or arguing a settled point,—yielded, almost unconsciously, to the decisive manner in which Egidio had assumed that his marriage would be the best possible arrangement for the happiness of all parties. He saw that the dying man had set his heart upon it; he heard the young girl's goodness and beauty extolled; he knew her to be of high lineage; he found that she was to be the inheritrix of a large fortune; and all these combined circumstances, together with the unwillingness to thwart his expiring friend, worked confusedly upon his not unkind nature to induce him into a sort of mechanical compliance with what was so completely taken for granted. He conformed, almost without knowing he did so; he assented, hardly aware that his consent had not been formally asked. He found it was an understood thing, ere he had time to demand of himself whether he indeed wished this. He had a vague notion that he had intended to marry and settle about this time; and that he might therefore as well gratify his dying friend's wishes, marry the heiress of one of Bologna's most illustrious houses, and take to wife a virtuous young girl who was by no means ugly.

With some such floating thoughts, Capulet allowed the father to place his child's hand within his. His own good feeling, and ready gallantry, prompted some kindly whispered words, to the drooping figure beside him, as, in obedience to her father's signal, the young girl took her station there, with her appointed husband, before the good friar.

She had appeared, throughout, like one in a bewildered dream; acting involuntarily, and by no impulse of her own; regardless of external

circumstances, excepting as they affected her dying father, upon whom her whole soul seemed concentrated. But at the moment friar Ambrosio opened his book, and stood opposite, to marry them, the young girl raised her eyes, and fixed them with a searching look, full upon those of Capulet. It was but for an instant; but even in that short space, there might be read eager enquiry, appeal, and trust, expressed with all candour, but without a spark of immodesty in its full regard. The limited sight of the man of pleasure, could not convey to him all that there was of reliant, of touchingly hopeful, in this single look; but it enabled him to observe that her eyes were more beautiful in colour and shape, and far more expressive than he had yet thought them to be. To a man of more refined perceptions, there would have been eloquent indication of a newly-awakened prepossession in his favor, arising out of confidence in his honor and good qualities; he would have beheld something directly appealing to the better part of his self-love—to his consciousness of worth—to his most generous emotions: while the gay, surface-skimming man of the world, saw nothing more than a girlish, unpractised betrayal of liking.

But the newly-discovered undoubted beauty of her eyes, together with this symptom of innocent preference, won extremely upon Capulet, and made rapid strides in his good graces; so that by the time friar Ambrosio had come to the end of the marriage-service, the bridegroom was internally and sincerely congratulating himself upon the bride he had so unexpectedly won. The final words were spoken; and Capulet was about to crown the ceremony by turning towards Angelica, and claiming her as his wife with a nuptial kiss, when he was startled by a piercing scream which burst from her lips as she sprang from his embrace, and cast herself upon the dead body of her father. Egidio had breathed his last, in the very moment of beholding his sole earthly wish fulfilled.

Capulet's first care, after consigning the remains of his friend to the grave, was to remove his new-made wife from the scene of her sorrow.

Many reasons induced him to defer taking her home to Verona. He wished that time should do its kind office in restoring her native good looks to his young bride ere he should present her to his friends and kindred. He thought that an intermediate change of scene would do much to effect a diversion in her grief, and towards giving her an air of ease and dignity in her new position as the wife of a nobleman, before she appeared on the spot where she was to assume her rank and title. He trusted that his own precept and example would greatly tend to form her manners, and polish into unconstraint and self-possession, any girlish bashfulness that might naturally be expected as the result of her hitherto secluded.—nay, obscure mode of existence. He resolved, therefore, that previously to their repairing to Verona, he would take her on a visit to Bologna; where he might, at the same time, establish her claims as the heiress of count Agostino.

The journey, the fresh air, the variety of new objects, the good-humoured attentions of her husband, the total change from her late life of monotony, denial, and wearing anxiety, to one of comfort, amusement, and comparative excitement, operated powerfully and speedily upon the impressionable temperament of Angelica. The young girl recovered her spirits, her beauty; which soon gave token that it was originally of no common order, although privation and care had dulled its lustre for a time. Her complexion resumed its natural brilliancy; her large dark eyes shone with animation; her lips recovered their rich vermilion hue; and her tall figure showed in all its rounded yet elegant proportions, erect, and full of stately grace.

Her husband, delighted to find her beauty develope and increase with her restored health and spirits, spared no pains to cheer and enliven her. His habits of society had gifted him with a flow of sprightly conversation; his tastes had led him to cultivate a tone of gallantry, and an agreeable manner in his address to women; to this young girl, therefore, who had never seen any man, save her father, with even a pretension to the attributes of refinement, Capulet appeared the finished gentleman. He fulfilled her ideal of all that was attractive in manly beauty. In her eyes he was the perfection of chivalrous bearing, of

noble seeming. From the moment when he had appeared on the threshold of their poor home, bringing peace and comfort to her father's heart, —that father whose words had so often painted him to her in the partial words of a friend's enthusiasm,—he had become to her the impersonation of all that was grand and admirable in man. His rich attire, his air of conscious rank, his advantages of person, combined to impress her imagination. She looked up to him as a superior being. His very maturity of years gave him added consequence with the young inexperienced girl. He was then at the period of time when every added twelvemonth is apt to detract something from a man's good looks,—the very age which is often, in girlish eyes, the prime of manly life. Added to this, were his present good natured attempts to win her from her depression, his lively conversation, his gaiety of manner, all heightened in their effect by the tone of good breeding and conventional grace, which his social training had superinduced; what wonder, therefore, that the young lady Capulet grew daily more enamoured of the husband to whom a father's provident care, and her own singular good fortune had united her? For some time she lived in a blissful dream,—lapped in the delicious sense of the surpassingly happy fate which had suddenly become hers.

Her first awakening was a strange start of misgiving which she felt, on hearing her lord express his extreme exultation at the news that greeted them when they reached Bologna. It was discovered, on opening the count Agostino's will, that he had, by some means, come to the knowledge of his grandson's profligate courses; and that in consequence, he had declared, in a codicil lately appended to the original testamentary document, the absolute disinheritance of Egidio's son, while he constituted the daughter, Angelica, sole heiress. The terms in which the count disowned and disinherited the young man, were bitter and absolute; declaring that no one, upon whose honor the lightest taint of suspicion had once breathed, should ever bear the unblemished name and illustrious title which he had himself received as a spotless and sacred trust from a long descent of worthy ancestry. He formally annulled all claims of his, or his possible heirs; solemnly vesting all

rights in the person of his granddaughter Angelica, as sole representative of their ancient house.

Capulet's unreserved demonstration of delight on hearing this important increase to his young wife's wealth and consequence, gave her the first uneasy sensation of doubt lest her husband's regard for her, might be inferior to her own for him. It was the first of a long train of doubts that arose to haunt her, thenceforth, with their spectral shadow. She could not help calling to mind, that, before friar Ambrosio had entered their poor room, bringing the news of her claims to be considered an heiress to both rank and fortune, the lord Capulet had never signified his assent to her father's proposal of making her his wife. She could not but remember that even her own parent had admitted this as an additional reason for urging his friend to marry her at once. Could it be that he had no individual preference for her? That he would not have accepted her, had she been no other than the poor orphan girl he first saw her on the point of becoming? Would she have been rejected, had it not been for her title to wealth and a birthright equal to his own? Had then, her own poor beauty no attraction of itself for him? It was but too likely,—so her distrustful heart answered,—that a man so noble, so gifted, so endowed with every natural and adventitious advantage, should look down with indifference, if not with disdain, upon an alliance so far beneath what he had a right to expect. She now remembered, with the distinctness of an embittered mind, intent upon collecting confirmations of its own misgivings. Capulet's words:—"She is a mere child! Would you have me marry her?" They had at the time fallen upon her sense of hearing,—dulled with wretchedness, absorbed with fears for her father, and employed in listening to every moan, every dying accent of his,—as meaningless in themselves, and of slight consequence to her; but now they came back to her thought with a vivid and terrible import. He would not have wedded a poor unformed girl—a mere child. He would have rejected her as wholly unsuited to, and unworthy of him. "Rejected!" It was a bitter thought. "Rejected!" Her proud spirit,—for with all her sincere admission of self inferiority to him she loved, she yet had much sensitive pride, the pride

of womanhood,—writhed beneath the impression, that, had he been permitted a choice, he would have "rejected" her That had he followed the first impulse of his heart, he would have rejected one who had so little to recommend her in outward appearance; that had he been allowed time for reflection, and for the exercise of his better judgment, he would have surely refused, rejected her. But no, he had been hurried into a decision; his kindest sympathies were enlisted in his own despite, by the urgency of her father; and he had yielded, partly from unwillingness to cross his dying friend, partly perhaps from the consideration of a prospective hope, which was now more than confirmed by her increased heritage.

All these tormenting doubts beset her with renewed force, when she arrived with her husband in Verona. She saw him courted and admired in his own circles, flattered, followed; she saw his society sought, his opinions consulted, his patronage solicited. She saw him treated with the distinction due to the head of one of the first families in his native city; and more than ever she drew mortifying comparisons between his assured manners and her own deficiencies. She dreaded that she was awkward, ignorant. She thought she could perceive in him a look of anxiety lest she should commit herself, by some inadvertence when he presented her to his friends; she fancied she could trace a look of mortification at any want of ease, good-breeding, or usage of society on her part—at anything that betrayed her having known a humbler position than the one she now occupied. The mere dread of these things engendered the very evil they anticipated. They made her embarrassed, and ill at ease. She felt herself constrained, and showing to little advantage; and a thousand times she asked herself how he could admire one so full of imperfections,—so inferior in all that distinguished him. The more the sense of her own defects gained upon her, the more her love and admiration for him grew. But in proportion with her worship of her husband's superiority, and consciousness of her own little likelihood of attracting his regard in return, was the proud reserve with which she gradually learned to guard all these feelings from observation. She taught the fond attachment she felt towards him to lie con-

cealed beneath a calm,—not to say a cold exterior. She allowed the deep consciousness of her own inferiority, to assume the outward aspect of dignified, if not haughty, composure.

A superficial observer like Capulet was not likely to read the inconsistencies, and wayward emotions of a young girl's heart; and he soon came to look upon her as just the sort of woman he could have wished his wife to be.—handsome, lofty-mannered, somewhat passionless perhaps, but undoubtedly lady-like, and perfectly fitted to fill the high station to which she was entitled both by birth and marriage.

There was another subject that secretly agitated the heart of the young lady Capulet. Her brother's errors had not been able to estrange him from her affection. She still indulged a fond recollection of him in those early childhood times, when they had been playmates together, and when she had no idea that he was not as innocent in thought as she herself. Even his subsequent course of wildness, had been unknown to her in its worst features; and as for the many self-denials it had exacted from herself no less than from her parents they had but served to produce in her that feeling of compunction apt to arise in a heart which would willingly love where it cannot esteem; a feeling akin to tenderness, in its affectionate pity for the object of so much unavailing sacrifice. She generously regretted her brother's exclusion from a share of the heritage which had so unexpectedly fallen to her lot; and a thousand times she wished she knew where he was, that she might beseech him to accept the portion which should have been his. She thought how all-important this sum might now be to his welfare; and over and over she mused of how she might hit upon some means of learning where he was, how situated, and how she could best convey relief and comfort to him.

Once when she had dropped a few words, attempting to consult her husband on the subject, he had checked her from ever recurring to it again, by some worldly remark uttered in a light tone, touching the unadvisability of stirring the question of a poor relation, likely rather to reflect discredit, and bring trouble on them, should he ever come to light, than to produce either benefit or pleasure by his reappearance.

There was a grand entertainment at the Scaligeri palace, in honor of the coming of age of the young prince, Escalus. All the nobility of Verona were present; and many distinguished members of the most illustrious families from other Italian courts, had been invited, in honor of the occasion. Capulet, and his beautiful young wife, were of course among the former; and it gratified his pride not a little to see the admiration excited by her appearance,—strikingly handsome—even amidst so brilliant an assemblage of all that was loveliest in person and most magnificent in attire. The dazzling fairness of her skin was heightened by the black dress she still wore in memory of her father. The amplitude of its skirts fell in rich folds around her stately figure; while its otherwise shapely adjustment permitted the rounded grace of her white arms, and the slender proportions of her waist, to be seen to full advantage. It was closed at the bosom by a clasp gemmed with diamonds; while round her classically shaped head, and set amidst hair of the same jet hue as her robe, was a circlet of like jewels of the purest water. She looked the true Italian lady; there was the simplicity of good taste conspicuous even in the costliness of her array.

Capulet's judgment in feminine charms was no less discriminating than fastidious; and he knew that his own wife need yield to none of the young beauties then assembled in such star-like profusion. He took pleasure, amidst all his bustle of receiving and dispensing amenities himself, in noting the effect she produced upon others; and whilst he seemed only alive to the gaiety of the general scene, was in secret enjoying the impression produced by her beauty. It cast a reflected glory and credit upon himself, to be possessed of so universally-admired a young creature. But he was one of those men, who think it not prudent to let a wife perceive too much of the satisfaction derived from the contemplation of her charms, in their effect either upon himself or upon others; such men deem it safer not to trust womanly discretion with the power involved in the knowledge of this secret; and consequently are apt to indulge themselves with it privately and exclusively. Lady Capulet, therefore, was likely to perceive little or nothing of the true state of her husband's feelings towards her; and meantime she con-

tinued to form her own conjectures on the subject, imagining his indifference, and believing that it was the natural result of her own inferiority. Hitherto this had been a dull, saddened feeling; rather a passive regret, than an active emotion. Now, however, it was to be roused into all the poignancy of a real suffering, a strong passion,—jealousy, with a definite object. She had felt a mournful resignation, a deep dejection and self-mistrust, a sort of acquiescent sorrow in the slight regard she fancied herself capable of exciting in her husband's heart, in return for the warmth of love she was conscious dwelt in hers towards him, awaiting only his ardor to call forth its manifestation: but when once she thought she beheld another able to inspire that attachment which she herself despaired of obtaining, her resignation became anguish; her apathy, her dejection, her misgivings, were changed for resentment, and a wild sense of injury.

She had been dancing a measure with a Florentine of royal blood, when, as her princely partner led her to her seat, lady Capulet saw her husband engaged in earnest talk with one whom she had never before seen—a young lady, surpassingly beautiful, on whose animated countenance, beamed an expression of the most fond interest in what Capulet was uttering. Her eyes were fixed on his, her lips were parted, and slightly trembling, while she seemed to be absolutely drinking in his words, which he was breathing forth in a low under-tone of confidence. As lady Capulet approached, she heard her husband's concluding words, as he made a slight movement of his hand towards the bosom of his vest: "Not now; we shall be observed. But rely upon me, dearest lady. Trust in one who is wholly devoted to your sweet service. Trust me, dearest Giacinta." The lady looked in his face with her eager eyes, and whispered:—Kindest friend, I do!"

Not only was the look visible, but the words were distinctly audible to lady Capulet, though the full red lips softly formed, rather than uttered them. She felt a sudden glow mount into her own cheeks, at a familiarity, and ease of confidence, on the part of this young lady, which she was conscious her own intercourse with her husband had never yet assumed. She instinctively drew back, that she might not

disturb them by her approach; but she allowed herself to take refuge in the draperied recess of a window not far distant, whence she could still observe them.

She fed her misery by noticing the undoubted beauty of the lady. She drew mortifying comparisons between her and herself. She contrasted those golden tresses with her own dark ones. She saw how glowing, how sparkling with animation that fair countenance was, and felt how pale and distorted her own face must be, by the emotions that agitated her heart. She looked at the spotless white, girdled with a zone of rubies, while a single damask rose lurked amid the profusion of sunny curls; and she thought how radiant it all shone, against her own swart robes. She saw the appealing glance, the look so full of fond reliance, so expressive of confidence and preference, and her heart kindled as she saw them bent on him, whom she herself never felt encouraged to regard face to face with any such unreserve and open eloquence of look. Still more did her inmost soul stir, to think of the effect such looks must needs produce upon him towards whom they were directed; and to trace upon his countenance the actual reflex of their effect. She saw his eyes respond to the tenderness that beamed in Giacinta's, and yet with a sort of covert, stealthy air, as though he would fain not attract observation, towards their mutual good understanding. He continued his low-voiced conversation with her; but seemed to keep a guard on his manner, lest it should betray too much of exclusive devotion.

As all this presented itself to her sight, lady Capulet heard her husband's name pronounced by some one near her.

"Yes, that is lord Capulet;" said the speaker,—one of two young gentlemen who were lounging near to where she stood; "he is one of our noted gallants here in Verona, though his age might warrant a little more sobriety on his part, and a little more indifference on that of the objects of his gallantries. Besides, he is lately married; and he might learn to confine the sphere of his attentions to their legitimate orbit. His wife is a glorious creature! Such star-like eyes! A very goddess! A young Juno! I'll wager now, he would think himself a monstrous ill-used gentleman, should any poor fellow with less mature, but perhaps

none the less handsome pretensions, allow himself to make her the object of such court as he is paying to yonder beauty."

"Who is she?" asked the other. It was the very question lady Capulet had been feverishly repeating to herself, and thirsting to have answered.

"She is the lady Giacinta; a wealthy heiress; countess of Arionda in her own right. She is an orphan; no one to control her choice in marriage; and all Verona are dying to know upon whom she will bestow her estates, her rich dower, and—beyond all other treasures, herself. It was thought that this very lord Capulet was laying close siege to her heart, with some chance of success, just before he quited Verona; but he returned, bringing with him as a bride, a lady of a Bolognese house. Surely the countess Giacinta cannot think of paying such an old fellow as that, the compliment of wearing the willow for him. Yet many noted her drooping looks during his absence; and her revived spirits since his return. See how brilliantly happy she looks now! Her face to-night is as radiant and unclouded as noonday! The devil's in the old fellow for bewitching the young beauties, I think! What's his secret, in the name of all that's wondrous?"

"He doth not seem so very old, neither;" replied the other, laughing. "Your juvenile envy calls him old, when partiality, or justice, might fairly call him no more than middle-aged."

"No more? What more, or what worse, than middle-aged need you call him?" retorted the first speaker. "Surely a middle-aged gentleman should be no such very irresistible being to a fair young girl."

"Fair young girls *ought*, doubtless, to prefer fair young gentlemen, like ourselves, eh?" said his companion with a smile; but his face became graver as he added, "and yet I have known of these sober elderlies, who, if once they do contrive to fascinate the imagination of a young creature, fill her heart and soul to the utter exclusion of any hope for us poor simple youths, whom she is apt to look upon thenceforth as frivolous boys, until such time as she herself,—if she chance to have missed her elderly ideal meantime,—hath gained a wiser judgment with added years; for then, naught will suit her but a young husband, forsooth,

But with her added years have come silver hairs; and then the youths, who have become wise men, will have no more to say to her, than she would formerly have to say to them. And thus do youth and beauty play at hide-and-seek with age and gravity; chasing each other at cross purposes, till the game of life ends."

"It seems, then, you Paduan students have been at odd times worsted by your successful rivals, the Paduan professors?" replied the other gaily; but seeing the look of pain that settled more and more evidently on his friend's face, he passed his arm through his, saying:—"I heard something of this, but knew not it was so serious. She is married, then? And, as report says, to one old enough to be her father?"

The young Paduan said in a low tone that struggled to be firm:—"He is a worthy honorable man. She loves him. I have nothing to complain of. But my part in life is played out. Let us speak of other things, my friend."

"Not so, by heaven!" exclaimed the other. "Thou shalt not throw up the game as though thou hadst lost all, because the elder hand hath had the luck to cut thee out What if he have happened to win the partner thou sett'st thy heart on. There are others, man! Let us see if some of our Verona beauties cannot put spirit in thee to try one fresh venture! Come, I'll back thee! Come; and let me introduce thee to a certain fair cousin of mine, who is the very queen of hearts herself; though she might pass for the queen of diamonds, as she sits sparkling in her jewels, yonder."

The Paduan with a faint smile, suffered his impetuous friend to lead him away, and the two young gentlemen left lady Capulet still pondering on what she had heard of the first part of their conversation.

While she was still lost in thought, she was accosted by her late partner, the Florentine prince; who besought her to grace him with her hand, that he might lead her to a banquet prepared in one of the farther apartments, towards which, the company were now most of them proceeding. As lady Capulet assented, she gave one glance towards the spot where her husband and the countess Giacinta had sat together. The moving crowd intercepted her view; but the next moment, she was

able to perceive that they had disappeared. In passing through the long suite of rooms, however, that led to the supper-saloon, she caught sight of them again. Through a doorway, opening into a side apartment, which was lighted only by the rays of the moon, that made their way through a draperied window filled with exotics; there, among the tall flowering plants, clearly perceptible amid the stream of moonlight that poured its silvery sheen around them, stood Capulet and the countess Giacinta. His wife beheld them but for a transient moment, as she was led past the entrance, but the vivid picture was distinctly traced. She saw her husband draw a letter from his bosom, give it Giacinta, and raise her hand to his lips; while the look of radiant happiness which beamed on the fair face of the countess, caused a shadow, dark as night, to fall upon that of her who saw it.

"She is calm, self-possessed, full of happy ease at heart—she, the guilty one, she, loving with an unhallowed passion the husband of another. While I, the injured, miserable wife, am tossed with a thousand agitating emotions;" thought lady Capulet. "And 'tis that very unruffled beauty, that very serenity of aspect, which gives her the preeminence in his eyes. Why, alas, cannot I, poor untutored, unpractised girl that I am, maintain as tranquil an air? Let me school myself to wear a look of ease, that may hide my aching heart from indifferent eyes, from his, above all."

In her proud agony, she contrived to stifle and shut up within herself the rage of jealousy that consumed her; and this very constraint she imposed upon the feelings burning inwardly, made her appear only the more exteriorly chilling. Her husband's admiration of her beauty was counter-balanced by his impression of her cold temperament; and at the very time she was glowing with concealed passion, he felt the only drawback to her charms was her want of warmth. There was thus, little likelihood of their coming to a knowledge of the amount of love mutually existing between them. She, bent on crushing all outward demonstration of the resentment springing from an excessive affection; he, unsuspicious of the cause, and only reading reserve almost amounting to indifference. She imagining herself held lightly by him as one

too young; he, feeling it more than probable that she looked upon him as too old. This very feeling on his part led to an unwitting confirmation of her self-mistrust and jealousy For Capulet, in his silly vanity and in his shallow notion of what might excite a girl's interest, was not unwilling that his young wife should hear of his character for gallantry. He thought that for her to know of his reputed successes among women, would be to give him consequence with her, and enhance his value as an attractive man in her eyes. He scarce attempted therefore to deny the charge, when it chanced to be jestingly alluded to; but laughed it off in such sort, as rather to accept as a compliment, than refute as a serious accusation. Consequently, had any evidence of his young wife's jealousy inadvertently escaped her, he would have been rather pleased than otherwise to let her suppose that they were not entirely without grounds. In all essential respects, however, he treated her with affectionate consideration; and was a kind, nay, an indulgent husband.

It happened, shortly after the entertainment at the Scaligeri palace, that lady Capulet was walking up and down one of the shaded alleys in her garden, brooding upon all the circumstances which had that evening so painfully impressed themselves upon her; when her meditation was disturbed, by perceiving some one standing in the path before her. The abruptness of the approach it was, partly, which startled her; and also the strangeness of the appearance. It was a boy, a ragged urchin, of some eight or ten years old. His clothes were literally mere tatters, and hung about him with scarce a pretence of affording a covering; but they might have been costliest apparel, for aught of beggarly they communicated to the air of him who wore them. The various color of the patches might have been selected for picturesque effect, so little of mendicant wretchedness did they impart. Although the rents discovered the bare skin, yet its texture and color spoke somewhat of delicate and refined that seemed no part of pauperism. The young limbs had a turn and polish that conveyed a something of high breeding; the face was instinct with a look of aristocratic self-assertion, and native haughtiness; it was not vulgar boldness, nor forwardness, nor pert audacity; it was neither presuming, nor pretentious, but a settled, innate expres-

sion of arrogance. It was nothing assumed or put on; but an ingrain, inborn confidence and consciousness, the confidence of blood and birth. It was the same integral animal qualification, which swells the veins of the high-bred horse, which gives vigor to his muscles, and grace to the turn and proportion of his limbs. The child stood there in the meanest of plebeian garbs, but he looked from top to toe the little patrician.

Lady Capulet had no thought of alms, when she said:—"What is it you seek, child?"

The boy fixed his eyes on her, and answered:—"You

"I, child? How came you here? Who are you?"

"I am Tybalt; your nephew. I came here, because my father bade me come, when he died. He told me to seek my aunt, and that she would be a mother to me. Are you not she? You are lady Capulet, aren't you?"

"My brother's child! my poor brother—my dear brother. Yes, you are like him, boy! 'When he died,' you say? Alas, he is dead then!"

"Yes; but he charged me with his last breath never to forget that though he lay there dying like a rat in a corner, he was born a gentleman, of an honorable house, one of Ferrara's noble families: that though misery had dragged his name through the very mire, yet its genuine lustre could not be dimmed or sullied, and that he bequeathed to me the duty of wearing it in its original brightness. But I will never take what he left tarnished," said the boy, with a flashing eye. "Best make myself a new one at once, than seek to rub off old rust. I heard what Matteo and the rest said, about his boasting of a lofty name that he had degraded. I made the fellow rue his having dared to utter a slighting word of my father; I drubbed him within an inch of his life: but I remembered what he had said about the name having suffered degradation, and I vowed to myself I would never bear it,—and I never will. I'll earn one of my own, and make it famous."

"Will you take mine?" said lady Capulet, smiling at the boy's indignant earnestness. "I am to be a mother to you, you know; you will bear your mother's name."

"Capulet; ay, I do not know that I could do better;" said the boy

with an air of consideration, as if he were about to confer a favor by adopting the title as his own. "I will become a Capulet, I think. It is an ancient name, is it not?"

"One of Verona's most illustrious and oldest houses;" said lady Capulet. "Few vie with it in distinction and honorable renown.'

"And those few shall hereafter learn to yield it undisputed priority;" replied the boy. "When I grow up, I will be a soldier. And soldiers can hew their way to even royal preeminence."

Lady Capulet's resolution to take the entire charge of her brother's orphan son, was warmly seconded by her husband. Capulet took a great fancy to the boy; thinking him a fine manly lad. His natural arrogance passed for proper family pride. His hot temper, and fiery, impetuous bearing, were thought to be proofs of high spirit. His lordly disdain of others, his haughty self-sufficiency, were deemed part and parcel of his lofty descent, and his sense of the importance of the family of whom he now made one. His uncle gave him his own name, and treated him, in all respects, as if he were by blood, instead of by marriage and by adoption, a scion of the noble house of Capulet.

There was to be an entertainment al fresco, at Villa Arionda. The countess Giacinta had invited her friends to meet in the beautiful grounds of her country mansion; and lady Capulet resolved to avail herself of the opportunity which such an occasion would afford of still more closely observing the conduct of her husband towards their fair hostess. She looked forward to the day with an eagerness of impatience that seemed like joy; instead of being, as it was, the feverish anxiety springing from bitterest dread. Jealousy is ever inflicting new tortures on itself in the vain hope of allaying those it already suffers. It conceives that to know the worst it suspects, would be preferable to the present agony of suspense; and lady Capulet longed to have her fears either confirmed or annulled.

But whatever of consoling, or freshly alarming, might have been in store for her from what she gathered from her observations on this day,

she was destined never to know. Before the day arrived, Giacinta, in her prime of youth and beauty, was struck by a mortal illness. She died suddenly; and three days before the one on which her friends were convened to meet at her villa, they were all assembled in the great church of St. Peter's to witness the ceremonial of her lying state. There, on a bier, according to Italian custom, lay the fair body, arrayed in its richest robes, decked in its costliest jewels. She, whom they had looked to behold in all the animated beauty of a prosperous existence, young, lovely, wealthy, mistress of rank, of lands, surrounded by numerous friends, was stretched before them, cold, lifeless. In lieu of playful converse, of dancing, of lively music, there was the solemn pealing of the organ, the choristers' mournful voices chanting her dirge, the funeral train of priests, the attendant acolytes with swinging censors, the sad faces of weeping friends, the but half-stifled sobs of her domestics, who stood there lamenting. There was a hush—a pause. And then these latter, as was the wont for retainers of deceased nobility, passed in sad procession round the body of their late mistress, offering their last homage of servitude and fealty in the words, "Comanda niente altra da me?" Not a heart there, but was rung by the thought of the contrast presented by this scene with that which they had looked forward to; but lady Capulet, in the midst of her shocked sympathy, could scarce forbear indulging a cruel joy, as she watched her husband's depth of grief. A sense of security, of triumph, took possession of her, as she looked again upon the marble stillness of those features, whose beaming expression of fond happiness had once caused her such misery. Suddenly, there was a sound of horse's feet galloping across the space outside; there was a stir among the crowd that hung about the entrance of the church; and then, through the midst of them, burst a young man, in an officer's uniform, who rushed staggeringly up the centre aisle, with pale face, and wild looks. He made his way straight to the bier upon which lay the dead Giacinta, and cast himself prone upon the body.

A murmur of amaze and inquiry ran among the crowd. "Who is he? Who can he be? Who is this stranger that claims so dear an interest in her?" were the questions that each asked of each. Some

stepped forward to prevent, some to assist the young man; but when they raised his head from her bosom, they found he was equally insensible to their opposition or their aid. He was dead. He had struck his dagger to his heart, that it might wed hers in death

Then, an old serving-woman of Giacinta's, raised her feeble voice. It was heard in the silence which ensued among the awe-stricken crowd. She told them that the young gentleman who lay there dead, was secretly betrothed to her dear mistress. She herself, she said, and one other, were alone privy to the engagement between the lovers. It had been Giacinta's wish to have it concealed, until such time as she could present her future husband to her assembled friends; and it had been her intention to do this, on the occasion of the festival she had appointed three days thence. But Heaven, seeing fit to decree otherwise, had called her to itself; while her betrothed had been permitted to proclaim his right of being joined with her in the grave, by yielding his own life upon her dead body. The assembly reverently acknowledged the lover's sad claim. His corse was laid beside hers on the bier; the chanting of the dirge was resumed; the funeral ceremonies proceeded; Giacinta and her betrothed were borne together to one tomb, and side by side rested in death.

Lady Capulet on her return home, was rebuking herself in all humility of remorse for the injustice of her late jealous suspicions, when her husband volunteered the confession that he himself was the one other person mentioned by Giacinta's servant, as being the only sharer with herself in the secret of her mistress's private betrothal. He said, that, as the young lady's guardian, and an old friend of her father, he had been informed of their mutual attachment; that he had been the medium of communication between the lovers; had conveyed their letters from one to the other, during the period of the young soldier's absence with the army; (here lady Capulet's heart smote her, as she heard this explanation of a circumstance which had caused her such jealous pangs;) and, in short, had been their confidant assistant throughout. For although the young countess was accountable to no one but herself for her choice in marriage, yet as her lover was then but a

young soldier of fortune, they wished to keep their engagement a secret from the generality of her friends, until such time as he should attain military rank and distinction to entitle him, in worldly eyes, and in conventional esteem, to become a fitting aspirant to the hand of the lady Arionda. "Dear creature! Sweet Giacinta! She had looked forward with a proud hope to the day when she was to present him whom she deemed no less endowed by nature, than by his now acquired honors, with full title to her loving favor; she exultingly trusted that the time was come when she might proclaim to the world the preference she had so long cherished in patient expectancy of this happy moment. Alas! alas! a moment never to be hers. Dear Giacinta! gentlest lady! cold in death thy warm and loving heart! Pale thy sweet face! A bier thy nuptial couch! That those tender limbs, that so fair a body, should find such resting-place!"

While her husband gave way to these lamentings, lady Capulet felt her resolution, to throw herself into his arms, and own all her late weakness, her doubts, her jealousy, gradually fail her. She felt as it were, her heart contract and close, at the sight of his grief for one whom she had so long feared as a rival. So mean a passion, so narrowing to the soul is jealousy, that it perpetually inspires a thousand new unworthy chimeras, to crush and dispel any occasional yearning towards good. Had lady Capulet yielded to her first generous emotion of contrition, and her consequent impulse of unreserved confidence in her husband, she would have saved herself many an hour—nay, many a year of torture. As it was, she thought:—"Why did he tell me this? Why did he explain to me the circumstances of his connection with Giacinta? Could he have suspected my jealous folly? So far from confirming his suspicion, let me rather conceal from him that it ever had grounds; and if I have done him and her injustice, I will right them in my own belief of their innocence. Let that suffice."

But who shall safely rely upon the resolve of a weak heart to do justice in thought to wronged friendship? If we would be sincere in such redress, let us make honest, open avowel, face to face with our injured friend. Let us ask his help in our endeavour. Let us rather

confide in the strength of his forgiving love, than in our own frail, unassisted, secret resolutions. Seldom have these vigour, of themselves, to be maintained. The very courage to avouch the error that originated them, is a test of their force, and a proof of their sincerity, as well as being an expiatory effort we owe to those whom we have wronged.

Lady Capulet had another motive for thinking it unnecessary to make the mortifying confession of her jealousy to her husband. She was about to become a mother; and she fondly trusted that this new claim upon his tenderness and regard, would centre them wholly upon herself. How could she imagine there was need to own having entertained a doubt of his affection, when she so soon hoped to see it exclusively hers? She looked forward to the birth of her child, not only as a source of delight in itself, but as a means of securing the love of him she so loved and revered.

But when her little girl was born, being unable to nurse it herself she was compelled to give up the hope she had allowed herself to indulge from the joint pleasure of her husband and herself in possessing this mutual source of interest. Her own health had suffered much. It was thought advisable that she should have a change of air; the infant Juliet was therefore consigned to the care of a wet-nurse; while, as soon as lady Capulet herself could bear the journey, her husband took her on a visit of a few months, to some old friends, who resided on their estate near Mantua.

It was a charming spot; its owners were pleasant people; in such a scene, and in such society, lady Capulet regained health and spirits, with renewed strength of body; but she suffered a relapse of her old mental malady. Their host and hostess had an only daughter, named Leonilda. She was a gay, light-hearted creature, the treasure of her doting parents, and the delight of all who knew her. She was playful in speech, sportive in manner, from pure cheerfulness of nature. The very sight of her face entering a room, was like a beam of morning; and her airy figure, as it flew along the garden-paths, seemed akin to the dancing of the flowers and leaves, stirred by summer breezes. Her eyes sparkled and moistened when she spoke on any animating theme,

like sunshine reflected in the water; and her color varied with her thoughts, as the sky reddens at the coming of dawn. She was happy in herself, happy in others; and made others happy, in seeing herself so happy. Her blithe humour was infectious; few could resist the influence of her sprightly tones, they were so unaffectedly gladsome; they compelled an unconscious sympathy of joyful feeling. You felt elate you knew not why, only to look at her. At least Capulet always felt this, when he had his eyes on her face, and he naturally took delight in letting them rest there often. He had known her from earliest childhood, and loved her fondly as though she were still a child. She knew him as a good-humoured, merry mannered man, who had always lent himself to her gay whims and fancies, and had made himself a pleasant companion, ever since she could remember, in spite of the difference between their ages. They were old acquaintances,—for he was an intimate friend of her father and mother, to whom he had been all his life in the habit of making long and frequent visits,—and they therefore met now with all the familiarity and ease of enjoyment naturally springing out of such a connection.

Instead of this mutual liking appearing, as it was, the simple affection between a light-hearted girl, and a lively tempered man, whose manners suited each other, to lady Capulet's jaundiced eyes, it seemed the powerful attachment which springs up irresistibly between assimilating natures. She saw in the gay and brilliant Leonilda precisely the being calculated to win the love of an accomplished man, such as she deemed her husband. She felt it to be but too likely that the smiling bright-eyed beauty should attract him in preference to the dark-eyed gravity of countenance, and the serious repose of demeanour, which were her own characteristics. Again she allowed her thoughts to toss and struggle in the perpetual unrest of jealous surmise.

Meanwhile time insensibly crept on. Capulet was not willing to leave friends with whom he was so happy; and his wife dared not trust herself with any proposal of departure, lest her true motive for disliking to protract her visit should betray itself. At length Capulet himself began to share the desire which had been one of her motives for

wishing to return home Both Father and mother longed to see their little girl. They had heard, through messengers appointed to bring them regular news from Verona, that the child was constantly thriving; but now that it had attained an age beyond mere infancy, they wanted personally to witness its growth and improvement, and to have it always with them.

Hitherto, the little Juliet had dwelt at the farm-house, with her foster-parents, tenants of the Capulet family. The farmer was a hearty, jocular, good soul, well nigh as fond of the little daughter of his feudal lord, as of his own bantling; while his wife vowed there was not a pin to choose betwixt them, which was dearest to her, lady-bird Juliet, or baby Susan.

"May-be, our Susan is the best little good thing in her temper, whilst my pretty lamb here, is the sweetest innocent in her pets and her tempers;" said the nurse to her good man, who was busy near his wife, trimming and training some stray branches of a vine that grew against the wall, near to which she was sitting, with one babe on her lap, and the other at her feet.

"How mean'st thou, wife? Like a true woman, thou muddl'st thy kindly meaning with untoward speech. What wouldst thou say of our good little Susan's temper, and pretty Jule's tempers?"

"Marry, all the world trows that temper and tempers are two. Susan hath an angel's temper for honey-sweet goodness. Take her up out of her sleep, and she'll crow and coo; snatch the pap from her very lip, and she'll crow and coo; whip her out of your arms, and lay her sprawling on the floor, and bless ye, she'll still laugh, and coo, and crow, like any cockrel! But it isn't so with Jule! No, no! Marry come up, I warrant ye, my young lady-babe knows who's mistress. She'll kick and foin, a very colt of viciousness, an' ye cross her anywise. See her only this morning! When my young madam must needs have Susan's bowl of milk 'stead of her own; how the pretty fool fought and strove for it, till she got it. Susan, I warrant ye, knew her place, and gave't up. She's a good little soul, is our Susan; but Jule's a dear lambkin of pretty wilfulness."

"Ay, by my holidam, that she is!" quoth the farmer. "She's like one of these birds, wife;" said he, pointing to the dove-house, just above their heads; "there's a deal o' pouting, and ruffling, and show of angers, and threatenings, but it's all love, bless ye, all love. Jule 'll kiss ye, very minute after she's done roarin' and strivin' for something she's set her heart on. Wilt thou not, Jule?"

"Say 'Ay,' as thou did'st yesterday, when he asked his merry question, after thoud'st fallen and broken thy brow, Jule;" said the laughing nurse, to the babe on her lap. "See now, how she's rumpling and foraging my kerchief! Ha' done then, lady-bird! 'Tis naught, 'tis naught, I tell thee! Thou wilt not like the wormwood, I promise thee. 'Tis high time thou wert weaned, lambkin. A good bowl o' milk is what's best for thee, now. Thou liked'st it well this morning, thou know'st. Art thou so headstrong? Yea, art thou? Nay then, taste it, sweetheart, and see how the bitter will put thee in a pretty pet."

The good farmer had stayed his hand from his work, to watch the little humors of the child, as his wife played with it, pretendedly teasing and thwarting it, now withholding, now proffering that which she had taken care to render distasteful to her nursling; when, as he turned again towards his work, he saw the wall heave, give a lurch, and recede from the twigs he was preparing to nail against it. At the same moment, through the still air, came a deep sound, inexpressibly awful in its hidden menace. The farmer cast his eye up towards the blue sky. No signal of storm was there. It was not thunder. Then the dove-house swayed to and fro—the birds flew wildly hither and thither—the ground shook, with a vast tremble—trees waved, and bent their tops, as beneath a mighty wind, though no breath of air was stirring—and again was heard that grave subterranean murmur. "Away, wife! Away!" cried the farmer; "make the best of thy way to the field yonder. Go not near the house. Away! The earthquake! Trudge, quick as thou canst to the open field with my lord's babe, while I follow thee with our own. Where's Susan? Mother of heaven! the child has waddled away out of ken. No, there she is, 'mongst the vine-leaves. Begone you, wife; I'll fetch our Susan. Away with ye! Trudge, trudge, woman, for dear life!"

The nurse fled, with the child in her arms. The next instant, down came the dove-cote with a crash; and in another moment, as the farmer ran to snatch up his little one, the vine-covered wall tottered, was split and rent asunder, and falling, both father and child were buried beneath its ruins.

Next day, when the lord Capulet and his wife arrived, they found the little Juliet safe; and their first care, in gratitude towards her who had been the means of the child's preservation, was to remove the nurse from the farm, and instal her in their own household, making it her future home. In the pride of being at the great house, in the constant dwelling beside her foster-child, the nurse found consolation for all that she had lost.

But no sooner had Lady Capulet's anxiety respecting her child been allayed, than her mind reverted to the subject that usually engrossed it. She thought over all that had occurred to confirm her fears of her husband's attachment to another than herself. She remembered his high spirits, his evident state of happiness and enjoyment, during their late sojourn at Mantua; she remembered a sudden sadness that had taken possession of him on the eve of their departure from their friends' house; she recalled the struggle with which he had,—plainly enough to her eyes,—endeavored to conceal his emotion at parting with Leonilda; she recollected how vainly he had contended against the dejection into which he had fallen during the journey, and which had preyed upon him ever since, rendering him,—usually so lively, so careless-tempered,—thoughtful, absent, and melancholy. When she ventured to allude to his evident depression, he had roused himself, denied that he had any particular source of uneasiness; but soon relapsed into his former abstraction. This, instead of decreasing, grew upon him; and at length, he, in a half-affected negligence of manner, announced that he intended returning for a few days to Mantua, as he did not think his friend looking well when they had left him.

Lady Capulet dared not trust herself to offer any objection; but she felt sure that although Leonilda's father was the pretext, it was Leonilda herself who occasioned this return. It was true, that Capulet's

friend had been ill—sufficiently ill to keep his room for a few days, and to consult a physician.—therefore the solicitude on the father's account was plausible enough; but lady Capulet's conviction was, that the true anxiety arose from a desire to see the daughter. She believed that her husband could not endure the absence from her he loved; she believed that it was this sick desire to be with the secret object of his passion, which caused his unhappiness, and which induced him to brave all, that he might return to her.

Capulet went to Mantua. Again he went; and again; and yet again. These repeated visits tortured his wife into full credence of all she had feared. Yet she allowed not one symptom of jealousy to escape her. She was too proud to complain; too anxious for his love and esteem, to risk losing the portion she possessed, by reproaches; she disdained to have any betrayal of her feelings extorted from her. She suffered in silence.

Time crept on, and brought no abatement of her misery. Rather increase of conviction, and bitterness of regret. She had nothing to complain of in Capulet's behaviour to herself. It bespoke respect, and entire confidence in his wife's worth and excellent qualities. But she felt herself estranged from her husband's heart; she thought herself bereaved of his passionate attachment, his preference, his love.

Once, she was brooding on this void in her existence—this failure in her dearest hopes, and she could not refrain from shedding tears in the forlornness of her heart. Capulet was away; gone on one of his frequent visits to his Mantuan friends; and she felt peculiarly lonely,—desolate, deserted. Her little girl was at her feet, playing with some chesnuts, that Tybalt had collected for the child's amusement, to roll about the floor, and scramble after. For Juliet could run about well, now; and talk, and prattle, and play with him; and the boy was very fond of his pretty gentle little cousin, who, in turn, had taken a great fancy to him.

The sight of her mother weeping, caught the child's attention, and she paused in her sport. The burnished brown balls were permitted to roll unheeded away, as the little creature raised herself from the ground,

and leaned against her mother's knee, and gazed up in her mother's face.

"What are you crying for, mammina? Have you hurt yourself?" Lady Capulet had, unconsciously, one hand clasped in the other. "Have you hurt your poor finger? Let Juliet kiss it, and make it well. Or I will fetch nurse to bind it up; she always cures me, when I hurt myself."

"I have not hurt myself, cara di mamma;" said the mother.

"Then why do you cry? Has any one else hurt you? Let me look at your hand; you hold it as if it pained you. Let me kiss it."

"No one has hurt me, foolish little tender heart;" said lady Capulet, softly pinching the cheek of the face that looked up at her with such childish earnestness; "I have no wound. None that I could show to you, dear child. Who should hurt me?"

"Who indeed?" echoed Tybalt, who came into the room just then, and heard his aunt's last words. "I should like to see the man who would dare to hurt or offend you. Boy as I am, I'd teach him better manners."

There was something in the lad's defiance, idle vaunt as it was in one of his years, that sounded pleasantly to lady Capulet; it seemed a promise of championship to one who felt herself forlorn.

"Why, what wouldst thou do, by way of lesson to one who should injure me, young cousin?" she said with a smile. "Thou art yet too slight to think of coping with a grown man, should such a one offer me wrong."

"Skilful fencing masters many a tall fellow;" said the youth; "and I practise evermore, that I may get perfect command over my weapon; for that gives command over men,—over all. But there are ways even for those who have the disadvantages of inferior years, inferior strength, and inferior skill in fence;" added he, nodding his head with an air at once mysterious and confident.

"Indeed? and what may they be?" asked lady Capulet.

She was startled, when he promptly replied:—"A hulking giant, beyond the reach of a poor swordsman, might be brought down by a

poisoned arrow, or a sure draught. Italian honour wronged, must be avenged, come the vengeance by what means it may. Italian revenge for injured honor is not over-scrupulous. Why should it be? He who wrongs mine honor, becomes my rightful victim. If I cannot retaliate by force, I may by craft. If I have not the power myself to punish him as he deserves, I may yet contrive that he shall not remain unpunished. No; none who offend me, or mine, shall ever escape without his due."

"What! talk'st thou of poison, boy? Dost thou know how fearfully it sounds in thy young mouth?" said lady Capulet, lowering her voice beyond hearing of the child, Juliet.

"Never too young to consider means of avenging insult;" replied the stripling, with one of his haughty looks. "Long ago,—before I came to Verona,—an old man, a neighbour of ours, gave my father a curious poison. I heard them talking together about its properties. The old fellow, who thought himself obliged to my father, gave it him, as a valuable matter, the possession of which might one day stand him in good stead. He told him it was so subtle, that a few grains of it laid in a glove, would make that glove a deadly gift to its wearer. The venom would insensibly make its way through the pores of the hand, take possession of the vital powers, palsy them, subjugate them, and eventually destroy life itself, without leaving a trace of how the mortal stroke had been dealt. The safety, the unsuspected security, thus afforded of putting an enemy to death, gave the value, he said, to the gift. They did not know I overheard them, but I did; and when my father died, I, as his rightful heir, took possession of the only thing of worth he had. I brought it away with me, thinking, boy as I was, I might need vantage my years denied me 'gainst possible foes. But I shall never want it now. Henceforth, I trust to mine arm as my sole avenger."

"But it is not fit, boy, thou shouldst possess means of such deadly potency, within thine own discretion, to use or not, as seems to thee good;" said lady Capulet. "Give the poison into my keeping. Best not trust thyself with such fatal temptation to evil."

"Willingly; I have no farther use for it. I will deliver it into your charge, that you may make sure of my never using it, by throwing it away yourself."

Well had it been for the lady, had she immediately done so. The words she used to her nephew, were applicable to herself. 'Best not trust thyself with such fatal temptation to evil.' But when once the poison came into her possession, she contented herself with carefully locking it up in a cabinet in her own room, thinking it was out of harm's way, now that it was beyond the power of a rash boy. She never reflected that it was within the reach of a desperate woman—a woman made desperate at moments, by the haunting thoughts of a fancy heated and distempered by the passion of jealousy. It never struck her, that she, who shrank from the bare possibility of crime in another, might be goaded to its commission herself, when the insupportable sense of wrong, together with opportunity, should combine to sting her into oblivion of all, save thirst for vengeance.

Some time after this, it happened that there was a fashion,—a sort of rage,—for a peculiar light-colored glove. They were worn by all ladies who pretended to taste and distinction. They were presented in half dozen pairs by gallants to their mistresses. They were called Cleopatra gloves; and were of a pale tint, supposed to be that of the waters of the Nile. In short, they were just that sort of elegant trifle, which constitute a necessity, while the "furore" lasts, in circles where luxury and fashion dictate laws.

Capulet one morning brought several pairs of these gloves as a present to his wife. She, charmed with the attention from him, received them with gracious words of delighted acceptance But all her pleasure was marred, when he added:—"By the way, I think of riding over to Mantua next week, what say you to sending a share of your Cleopatras to Leonilda? I will take them for you. They will be a welcome gift to a country damsel, who, though she lives out of the world, only prizes the pretty toys and trickeries of the world the more. Come, will you spare them to her; no churl are you, good my lady, I know. So, how say you?"

What could she say? None other, of course, than that she should be happy to comply with his wish. But in her heart she recoiled from this enforced courtesy. To be offered through him, too! And then the cruel thought arose, that this was a planned thing,—a scheme of her husband's, to present Leonilda with some of these gloves as a gallantry from himself, under pretence of being a friendly token from his wife. She was used as a screen, then,—a convenient blind!

Lady Capulet revolved and revolved these galling thoughts, until she writhed beneath the barbed agony. Suddenly an idea darted like a lightning-flash into her brain. Across her mind, darkened and confused by the chaos of her previous reflections, this new thought came with a scorching, scathing glare. It was that of the poison. The poison that was so subtle in its effects. The poison that was to be administered through the medium of a glove. The poison that she had by her, concealed in her cabinet. At first, appalled, she started from her own suggestion; but gradually it won upon her imagination; she confronted it; she admitted it; until it seemed to smile upon her, as a possible ray of guidance, of hope. She went so far as to consider that since a week was to elapse before her husband's setting forth for Mantua, she could decide in the interim whether one of the pairs of gloves among the packet she sent, should be a poisoned pair or not. Once permit the soul to entertain a criminal purpose—to dally with its proposition—to moot the possibility of wrong doing; and it is sullied ready for the deed. She went farther. She went so far as to *prepare* a pair, and to place them in her cabinet, marked with a private mark, that she might distinguish them and include them among Leonilda's or not, as she might at the last moment determine. Fatal first step in error! Who knows whither it may lead,—through what tortuous paths it may deviate from virtue and happiness,—in what unforeseen abyss of sin and misery it may end?

On the eve of her lord's departure, lady Capulet was sitting in her own room, with her little girl, as usual, playing about, amusing herself with her own childish games; now hunting Tybalt's chesnuts across the floor, now running in and out of the balcony, among the orange-trees

and oleanders, now busying herself with the pretty colors of her mother's silk-winders, now scrambling under the table, anon clambering up upon the chairs, and peeping into the vases and pateras, on the marble slab, or peering into the large mirror that hung above it, watching the vapour fade, and fleet, and disappear, as she touched it with her rosy lips, and breathed upon its crystal surface. Capulet had just left the apartment, reminding his wife of her promised gift to Leonilda, and bidding her make up the packet; as he meant to take horse for Mantua early on the morrow, that he might have the cool morning hours for beginning his journey.

The lady went to the cabinet. With an agitated hand she drew forth the drawer in which lay the gloves. Whether it was that the faint and scarcely perceptible odour which hung about the poisoned pair, affected her; or, that a sickening sense of their foul and insidious purpose overpowered her; but she wavered, put her hand to her forehead, and, turning away towards the open window, leaned against it, trembling, and overcome. She remained thus, for a considerable space of time, partly oppressed, partly sunk in painful reverie, when she was suddenly aroused by hearing her little Juliet exclaim, in the pretty caressing words of an Italian child's expression of delight:—"Quanto sono carini!" .How lovely! See what a gay lady I am, with my pretty gloves, like a grown woman! See here, mammina!"

The word 'gloves' struck upon the mother's ear, with a pang of ill-omen. She looked round, and beheld the child,—who had scrambled up to the cabinet by means of a chair,—with her baby hands buried in a pair of the well-known pale-tinted, Nile-coloured gloves; holding them up in innocent triumph, smiling, and exulting, and calling upon her mother to exult with her.

In deadly terror, the mother staggered forward, snatched them off, and gave one despairing glance to see if the fatal mark were there which identified the envenomed pair. They were unmarked; and lady Capulet, catching her child to her bosom, sank on her knees, and buried her face in her hands, in a passion of thanksgiving.

After a time she arose; set herself to satisfy the inquiries of her

child, who wondered to see her mother's agitation; and then, with as much calmness as she could summon, went to the cabinet, took from it the marked pair of gloves, which, together with the remainder of the poison, she set fire to, by means of a lighted taper, and watched them until they were reduced to ashes. When this was done, she made up the packet of Cleopatra gloves for Leonilda, with a firm hand; feeling as if in conquering her reluctance to send them, she made a sort of expiatory offering for her late intentional misdeed.

But though her gratitude was profound, for having been mercifully spared the frightful consequences to her child which might have resulted from her meditated crime, yet it could not so wholly inspire her with virtuous resolves for the future, but that they gave way beneath fresh incitement and temptation. Her tortures of jealousy and wounded love, were all bleeding anew the next day, when her lord took leave of her, professedly to go and spend some time with his friends at Mantua. She was sitting disconsolately in the garden; no sight of nature brought repose or solace to her perverted feelings; she was too much absorbed in the sense of her injuries, to derive relief and comfort from so pure a source.

Presently, she heard hasty footsteps at no great distance, as it seemed, from the alcove where she sat; and the moment after, she started up, in some alarm at seeing a man, with a pale face, and disordered attire, rush towards the spot. He was looking wildly around, and casting occasional glances behind him, as if in fear of pursuit. When he perceived the lady, he paused for a moment: then, forming a hurried resolution to throw himself upon her mercy, he cast himself at her feet, and besought her to take pity on an unfortunate wretch escaping from officers of justice.

"Should I be taken, they will condemn me to the galleys—break me on the wheel—burn me alive;"—thus he poured forth his incoherent supplication—"Save me, save me from the fangs of the bloodhounds! They will tear me to pieces! I am not so guilty as they think. Conceal me but until the first keenness of search is past. Then I'll reach a church. Once 'prender chiesa,' and I'm safe!"

The vehemence of his petition moved her. "Ay, sanctuary! 'Tis well thought of;" she said. "That will be your best refuge. There is no safe concealment here. How came you hither?"

"In my desperation, I contrived to leap your garden-walls. But they are close upon my track They can hardly fail to discover which way I have fled. Hasten, dear lady! Help me to hide! I am lost if they get hold of me before I can take shelter in a church. Once safe there, I can set them at defiance. They dare not break sanctuary. Hasten, hasten, lady!"

Lady Capulet yielded to his urgency: she stayed to question him no farther; but led him to a small door in the orchard-wall, that opened into a by-street, through which the family were wont to pass, on their way to the neighbouring church, close at hand. She directed him hastily; bade him take sanctuary there; and promised by-and-by, when all was quiet, to bring him food herself.

It was some hours ere she could make her way thither unobserved. The dusk of evening cast murky shadows along the old aisles, as the lady crept into the then empty church. The hour of vespers was over; the few stragglers whom the service had congregated, were now dispersed; and not a living soul was there, save that unhappy guilty one, lurking for a refuge from disgrace and death. The space of marble walls and vaulted roof, struck chill upon her senses; the silence, broken only by the echoes of her own trembling footsteps, impressed her with the vague feeling of dreariness and dread; the long vista of tombs stretching into a dim depth of distance that the eye could scarcely penetrate, saddened her with a gloomy and foreboding apprehension of she scarce knew what. Things familiar to her, in the broad face of noon, and in the company of accustomed associates, assumed a threatening and almost spectral aspect, viewed under the circumstances of privacy, and stealth, and shame that now invested them. An avowed criminal, an offender, a culprit evading justice,—was she absolved in blindly aiding him to escape a perhaps righteous retribution? She felt mistrustful,—dubious;—in precisely that mood of mind, which made her fancy herself, in a manner, partaker of the degradation and abasement, she had come to help. Her recent

meditated wrong, had fearfully diminished her self respect, her conscious integrity. She had forfeited the right of an unspotted conscience to denounce those who had fallen from virtue. She had a terrible secret prompting, that made her involuntarily acknowledge herself on a sort of guilty level with this man; although her crime was unperpetrated save in will, and his was actually committed.

She shuddered beneath the impression of some such feelings as these, while she watched the stranger eagerly devour the contents of the basket she had brought for him. His gaunt, and hunger-starved looks, no less than the avidity with which he fed, told how long and severe had been his fast.

"It puts heart in me!" he at length exclaimed. "I am a new man! Methinks I could now brave a meeting with those hell-hounds, and dare them to do their worst. But I shall baffle them yet. This respite—this good food—will enable me to follow up my flight. With midnight to favor me, I shall make my escape from this place; and whilst they snore in Verona, I push on to Mantua. There I have secure hiding-holes of mine own, out of all human ken. But should I never see you more, lady, let me thank you for your bounteous succour. I could wish to prove my gratitude to my preserver. Tell me, madam, is there aught in which I may serve you? Men call me ruffian, outcast, worthless villain. But there is something yet in Onofrio, vile as he may be, which bids him hope to show that he can be grateful."

"What was the crime for which the justicers are in pursuit of you?" asked lady Capulet, for she now saw him as he was, a reckless, hardened mis-doer, whom a temporary strait had rendered apparently submissive, but really abject.

"I stabbed a man to the heart, who had sought to betray the girl I love. The scoundrel seducer perished, as he ought, by the hand of him he would have deprived of all most dearly held. You, lady, dwelling in the calm of a prosperous existence, little know of the wild temptations to vengeance begotten of wrong and oppression. How should you conceive the goading torture of seeing the one object to which your soul claims a right—the right of your own devoted love,—lured away, beguiled, perverted, snatched for ever from your hopes?"

But lady Capulet's deep sigh unconsciously betrayed fullest sympathy with the case his words depicted.

Onofrio regarded her attentively.

"You can conceive it—you can feel it; you can comprehend its provocation, and the deadly thoughts it engenders. You have experienced its fever, its agony.—and know the fatal thirst which nothing can allay, save the blood of the injurer.—the tumult of the soul which nothing can still, save the death of the wronger. You have stretched forth a helping hand to me in mine hour of peril, lady; let me aid you to your revenge. Should you desire a home-blow for a faithless lover, or riddance from a troublesome rival,——"

He paused abruptly, and significantly.

Lady Capulet started to hear her own dimly-seen wish—a wish scarce shaped to herself—thus put into words.

He looked at her; then resumed:—"This arm is not one to hesitate. It will strike a sure blow. No compunctious scruple, at latest moment, shall shake the allegiance it vows. I owe my life, my freedom, to you; and I dedicate their first deed to your behalf. Tell me how it may serve you."

"You spoke of Mantua,—you are about to repair thither,"—faltered she.

"It is there the girl I spoke of, lives. Petronilla,—handmaiden to the lady Leonilda."

"Leonilda!" hurriedly exclaimed lady Capulet.

"Aye; she. Do you know her? A mocking witch; a flouting, jeering young madam, who banters and ridicules everything and everybody; one who turns you into a jest and a by-word, with a twinkle of her eyes; and who'll make you a laughing-stock and a mark for the finger of scorn, with a curl of her lip; and all forsooth under pretence of mirth and good-humour. A murrain on her smiles! I hate them. I owe her a reckoning for a pestilent trick she played me—or which I'm well-nigh sure she played me, when I was last there, lurking about their grounds in hope of catching a moment's sight of Petronilla. Is it the sportive cruelty,—the gay malice of the lady Leonilda,—so sinister in their af-

fected light-heartedness, and innocence, that have played you the ill trick of inveigling the heart you prize? I can well believe it of her. Is it she?"

Lady Capulet attempted to reply, but the words died on her lips. She stood looking fixedly at him; the pallor of her face, the expression of her eyes, the set rigidity round her mouth, sufficiently answering his question.

"And it is this laughing sorceress, you would have quieted? 'Faith, it would be benefit rather than harm, to stop the mouth of a scoffing simpleton like young madam Leonilda He'd deserve thanks, rather than blame, who should stay her gibing titter. It is just such foolish giglots as she, who ensnare and enslave men who see not through their gay craft; bewitching them out of their senses, with wily looks and wanton raillery. A man will risk his soul for one of those smiling mischiefs. I know them. I know her."

The thought of her husband—of his evident thrall to the fascination of those smiles—of the power they had to draw him perpetually away from his home—of his absence now on one of these visits—of the irresistible charm they possessed for him—of the spell which they exercised over him, counteracting and nullifying all her own hopes of winning his heart, pressed upon her, and sharply seconded Onofrio's words.

She still kept looking at him; motionless and unable to speak. But as he again paused, she drew her purse from her girdle, and mechanically placed it in his hand.

The man gave a grim smile.

"I am pledged to your wish, madam. I can read it without words. No need of them. Best none. But this much, understand. A dagger may silence a gallant—but a woman must be otherwise dealt with. Her own pillow will suffice; stopped breath leaves no tell-tale scar. They shall think no other than that she—ha! ha!—died a natural death. As though all death were not equally 'natural,' when it's desired—by those who die or by those who survive."

The lady shrank from his words. She revolted from the very brutality, which was to secure the accomplishment of her secret wish. But still she uttered no word. She turned away and retraced her steps;

the darkness of her own thoughts a yet more heavy shadow than any which fell amid the cloistered aisles. She crept through the door that admitted her into her own gardens; she stole along the embowered paths and alleys; and here she paced up and down for a season,—the silence, the retirement, the obscurity, all suiting best with her mood, and with the consciousness of stealthy misdoing, in which she was plunged. On repairing to her own apartment, the light seemed to bewilder her with a sense of guilt revealed and denounced. She sought refuge, in the curtained seclusion of her child's sleeping-room. But here, it was still worse. The half-light, the screened quiet reigning here,—above all, the sight of that baby face, reposing in its pure innocence, struck upon her accusingly, and aroused a sense of contrast with her own unquiet spirit, her own guilty purposes, that was intolerable. She once more took flight from the scene, forgetting that it was her own heart which presented such fearful images, and from which she could not fly.

At length, after some hours of vain struggle with herself, she took the resolution of going once more to the spot where she had left Onofrio; of forbidding him to interpret her wishes amiss; and of clearly enjoining him to forbear from all attempted injury towards Leonilda. But on reaching the old church she found it deserted. She carefully searched every portion of the building, but found it, beyond a doubt, empty. The man had evidently left the place, and was even now on his way to Mantua. There was no longer a choice; she must abide by what had already passed between them; there was no retracing.

All night she lay awake, a prey to self-reproach, and to horror unspeakable at the thought of her impossibility to avert the probable result of her own criminal instigation. What though she had not expressly stated her desire to have Leonilda removed from her path; she had allowed it to be inferred from her manner; she had left the inference uncontradicted when Onofrio plainly showed it to have been so drawn by him; nay, she had, by the significant donation of her purse at that very moment, sufficiently denoted her sanction to what was perfectly, though tacitly, understood between them. In the darkness of midnight, conscience is apt to lend us its clearest light. In the hours of gloom and

uncertainty, it often sheds its most luminous convictions upon the soul. We dare not then refuse admission to its holy, guiding ray. But with the coming dawn, we suffer it to pale, and lose its influence upon us. With the return of morning, with the rising sun, our boldness gathers strength to outface the gentler monitory light, and its power is soon quenched in the full glow and glare of day.

So with lady Capulet. When she arose next morning, she threw off many of the salutary fears and regrets of the past night, as overstrained, imaginary, and needless. She persuaded herself that she was unnecessarily allowing mere visionary terrors to haunt her. She endeavoured to feel satisfied that there was cause for neither self-blame nor alarm. She resolved to abjure reflection, to cast off anxiety, as much as possible; and to this end, she determined to go into society more than she had hitherto done, that its distractions might serve to dissipate a fruitless solicitude. She was piqued into a confirmation of this resolve, by noticing her husband's manner on his return from Mantua. He made no secret of his last visit having been a most happy one; he affected no concealment of the delight, the fresh accession of joy and good spirits it had occasioned him; and Capulet's gaiety determined his wife to try and emulate it, by her own assumed animation.

At the different houses lord and lady Capulet frequented, among the brilliant assemblage they met there, lady Capulet had often again encountered the young Florentine prince who had been her partner on the night of the ball at the Scaligeri palace. She could not but perceive, that his youthful highness was greatly struck by her beauty; and that he lost no opportunity of letting her know by the ardour of his manner, and by the eloquent language of his eyes, that he only required her sanction and encouragement to become at once her avowed admirer. But her own conduct had always been at once so unaffectedly and unostentatiously dignified, yet so quietly simple; so unmistakeably guarded, yet so gentle and kind in its manifestation of liking towards him; that the young man had never hitherto ventured beyond these mute expressions of his adoration. He contented himself by letting his patient assiduity, his constancy, his silent attentions, his never omitting to be present at any

party where she was likely to be, plead for him, and make their way, if it might be, to her heart. He knew that when sincerely and perseveringly pursued, these seldom fail in producing an impression on womanly nature,—more especially on Italian womanhood.

It was just at this juncture, that lady Capulet, resolving to enter more into the spirit of society, and take more pleasure in its diversions, consequently met, now almost daily, her admirer; and it was now she first began to allow herself to note the silent tokens of his passionate admiration with sympathy and interest. She went so far as to ask herself why she should waste the treasure of her love, by persisting in devoting it exclusively, though secretly, to a husband who regarded her, she was too fatally convinced, with more than the usual indifference and insensibility attributed to conjugal feelings. She sighed as she watched Capulet, at this very instant engaged in gallant assiduities and lively converse, by the side of one of the most distinguished beauties in the room; while she could not help reverting in thought to the young Florentine, who stood a few paces from her, she knew, in patient hope of her looking towards him. She permitted her eyes to rest in that direction; and the next moment brought him, elate and happy, to her side. Her heart involuntarily acknowledged the flattering homage of such watchful promptitude; and the dangerous question arose within her, "Why may not I, as well as so many others, take comfort from a love that proffers itself to me, since I am denied the one I seek? Why should I not follow the example of other women, who console themselves with a lover's attachment, when that of a husband is withheld? Why must I disdain a love so fervent as this youth's, and pine for an affection which I can never hope to gain? Surely, I am perverse,—unreasonable,—ungrateful. Why not secure the happiness of being beloved, without scanning too curiously its source? I am ever marring my own content by a too careful solicitude. Those who are most happy, take least thought Let me be thoughtless and happy, like my neighbours." She turned to the young Florentine with the gay ease of manner suited to such a course of reflection; and he was not slow to evince the joy with which it inspired him

Their conversation fell into a livelier strain than it had ever assumed before. Lady Capulet was animated by all the fire and vivacity of a half-formed, reckless resolution, to defy prudence, and its cold, calculating dictates; while the prince, enchanted by her grace and condescension, gave freer rein than he had ever yet dared, to the expression of his delighted admiration.

In a crowded room—in the midst of gay talkers like themselves—surrounded by company, and by a blaze of light, all this passed as mere social homage—the light gallantry suited to the scene and hour—no more. But when, on taking leave at the close of the evening, as he led her through the hall, towards her coach, the young prince, in an eager voice, which faltered and trembled with the consciousness of earnest meaning, that had deepened its tone from the high laughing pitch of their late converse, whispered an enquiry of whither her engagement would lead her on the following evening?—at what party they should meet?—she felt that they stood committed to each other as they had never done before, by his manner, and by her hurried reply to it:—"Oh, I do not go out to-morrow; I am at home."

She would have given much to have recalled her words. It was too late. His eyes already showed the hope he had conceived from them—from her embarrassed answer to his agitated question. The cloak of pleasantry,—of mere passing gallantry—would no longer serve. She could not but feel she had acknowledged the seriousness of the sentiment with which he regarded her.

"You will be at home—you will suffer me to come—" said the prince, in a glad low voice, raising her hand to his lips, as he placed her in her coach. She could only bow, as the equipage drove on. The young man's face, as she saw it at that last moment, beneath the high light of the lamps hanging around the entrance, fully disclosed to her in its eagerness of hope, its concentration of youthful enthusiasm, its earnest devotion, remained stamped upon her imagination during the dark tranquil hours that succeeded. In the sobriety and silence of night, she still saw that handsome young face—handsome in its native beauty of feature, as in its still more impressive beauty of energetic feeling,

and heartfelt expression,—and she then asked herself how she dared trifle with the sacred emotion she saw there depicted. "This young man loves me—with as much of truth and sincerity in his passion, as such a passion hath in its nature," mused she. Shall I wrong him, by giving him in exchange for his true affection, a counterfeit—a simulation of love? Shall I wrong this young, earnest heart, by the pretence of a passion I know I can never feel? I know full well I can never give love—genuine love to any but one—why then deceive this youth with a false show of love, in return for the gift of his honest heart. Should I not rather try to disenchant him from his present belief? To open his eyes to the delusion which makes him fancy that his present passion is indeed true love? It is true—sincere—genuine—as far as his young unhackneyed heart knows of love. But such a nature as his is capable of a far higher sentiment than a passing passion for one who is already a wife. That which he at present feels,—powerful and genuine as it may be, in its degree—is yet but a mere foreshadowing of that all-absorbing one which he shall hereafter know, when he meets the woman whom he can make exclusively his own. To lead him to believe this, were a far nobler deed, than to attach him to my side, a mere conquest of heartless vanity. The prince's worth—his preference for me—should all engage me to the trial. It shall be made. Let me attempt one honest thing, in lieu of those forbidden deeds, near to which I've strayed too oft, of late, for peace of mind"

This resolve was but confirmed next day. She sat, towards evening, her hands idling with silks and tapestry-needle, and thoughts busied with the same subject. Her child, the little Juliet, was frolicking about the spacious apartment, at high romps with cousin Tybalt. The sight of the little creature, sporting to and fro, in all the innocent gaiety, activity, and animation of childish spirits, brought the mother's heart another powerful argument in support of her determination. It added the weight of yet another reason why she should not be misled into betraying both herself and another into the misery and delusion of an illicit attachment. It opened her eyes to the fallacy, the absurd chimera, the hollow mockery, of proposing as a *consolation* the substitu

tion of an unlawful passion for that which the heart claimed as its true, its rightful, its chosen happiness. She saw the folly no less than the criminality, of hoping to make another man's love supply the place of his to which a woman has a claim by her own exclusive preference, as well as by wedlock ties. She felt the futility of the notion that a lover's liking, can console for the want of a husband's regard,—when that husband is beloved; she felt the utter mistake of attempting substitution in love, of one object for another, when the heart is once wholly, however hopelessly,—devoted.

"For his sake,—no less than for my own,—I will be entirely frank with him. His nobleness deserves it;" she murmured to herself.

"Juliet is tired with play; she'll rest now;" said the little girl, coming and sitting on the hassock at her mother's feet, and laying her head against her mother's knee.

"Poor little creature! Girls are soon wearied out;" said Tybalt; "they've good heart for play, but their sinews and muscles are nought. What a soft little peach cheek it is!" said he, giving her a gentle pinch on her rosy face, as he spoke. "And see what arms! As smooth and as pulpy as curd—and well-nigh as white. Pretty! But poor little things for hard work or hard play! A game at ball makes 'em ache—a racket would tire 'em to death—and as for fencing—fancy a girl's arm wielding a good sword, or a rapier, for even a quarter of an hour. Why, a poniard would be too heavy for her to handle."

"Fortunately, there's no need of our little Juliet's learning to defend herself; she has a doughty champion in that master of fence, her young cousin;" said lady Capulet, smiling.

Her nephew turned on his heel. "Well, I'm off to the meadows, beyond the Amphitheatre;" said he. "Some of our set promised to meet me there in the cool of the evening. I hope none of those Montague fellows will dare to come and disturb us. We've taken a fancy to the spot for a play-ground; and for their own sakes, they'd best not dispute the place with us"

"Can't you all play together there?" said his aunt; "there's surely space enough."

"As though you knew not, madam, that the same ground cannot contain Capulets and Montagues together! I am a Capulet, heart and soul; and I.—— there's no breathing-space for me, where one of those born-foes of ours—those Montagues, set their foot! Best let them keep away, or ——"

"Nay, young cousin, no threatening looks; no quarrelsome gestures. Thou know'st, my lord, thine uncle would be sore displeased were he to find thee ruffling and ranting, picking quarrels, giving and taking offence, and embroiling thyself in vexatious feuds with these youths of the Montague family. Although thine uncle hath little ground for aught but displeasure against the house of Montague, yet he deems it better befitting the honor of his own, to treat the members of theirs with quiet scorn, than open animosity. Take heed of this, I beseech you, cousin Tybalt."

The youth muttering with an ill grace a few words of half assent, flung out of the room.

The little Juliet arose from her seat; and leaning upon her mother's lap, and looking up in her face, she said:—"Take me up, mammina; I want to be cuddled. Hug me well; hug me in your arms."

The child was very fond of nestling thus, held soft and close against her mother's bosom. She was a gentle, affectionate little creature; demonstrative in her own manner, and loving to be petted and caressed, and made much of, in return. She had a pretty fondling way of climbing up upon her mother's knee, to kiss her, and to creep within her arms; where she would lie quietly, and happily, without stirring for a considerable space of time, contented with the mere sense of repose, of snug safety, and pleasant cherishing.

Now, tired out with her game of romps, lulled by the silence, composed into complete rest, by the comfort of her position (for who can hold a child with the magic,—the instinctive consulting of its accommodation in every limb, as a mother does?)—the little one fell into a deep slumber. Lady Capulet still sat thus, when an attendant announced his highness, the Florentine prince.

The young man entered, and was coming towards her with an eager

step; but the sight of the child sleeping in her arms, and, yet more, the calm of her own manner, seemed to affect him with a sudden impression, that made him pause in his approach.

The lady held out her hand smilingly, with a grave sweetness of look, and welcomed the prince; while she besought his excuse that she could not rise to receive his grace, burdened as she was with the babe in her arms.

He took the seat she proffered, on the couch beside her; he raised the extended hand to his lips; but there was something in the very frankness, and kind ease with which these courtesies were tendered by her, which made them somehow the less welcome to him.

"In the glare of a ball-room, in the confusion of a crowded assemblage, your image intoxicated me with the majesty of its beauty," whispered the young prince; "but in the tranquillity of this scene, my heart is subdued to the full sense of your perfections. It is your will, then, that I should be utterly powerless to restrain the avowal of the passionate admiration with which all this fills me? You must have seen it;" he hurried on; "you must have perceived the rapture which the mere contemplation of your beauty, at humble, hopeless distance, caused me; judge, then, how irrepressible the transport, which now hurries me into this mad avowal; judge it—judge it leniently—and forgive it; for it is you that have hastened it, by thus showing yourself to me, in your most winning, your most irresistible aspect. In your own home, in the gentle fulfilment of your motherly character, in the repose and retirement of such a scene as this—ah, a thousand times more irresistible, than in all the lustre of jewels, and of surrounding suffrage."

Lady Capulet made no attempt to withdraw the hand he had seized, and upon which he was pouring out his ardour of declaration; she even abandoned it to his grasp, and suffered him to press those kisses upon it, which he seemed no more able to restrain, than the passionate words he uttered.

"If I have myself brought on this avowal, as you say, my lord, believe that it was with no light thought of coquetry—no vain and

heartless wish to secure to myself the honor of a conquest over such a heart as yours; for to inspire even a passing liking in such a heart as your grace's, should be a triumph: but it is because I believe I know the full worth, the nobleness, the honor and generosity of that heart, that I now appeal to it, to strengthen me against the weaker part of myself, and to aid the higher and better part of my nature. I will confess to you, that I cannot take delight in such a passion as you avow. That even could I return it, it would be a source of misery and self-reproach to me, inasmuch as mutual, it would abase me in my own eyes, and existing on your side alone, I could not acquit myself of ingratitude. But I cannot return it; and I will not wrong you, by accepting a love which I cannot requite with one as sincere."

"I pray you, bear with me, my lord, and hear out what I have to say;" continued she, as she saw the prince about to interrupt her. "I will prove to you how highly I esteem the heart you offer me, by entreating you to believe that it is capable of a far higher passion than the one you now believe it to be filled with. It is capable of love—exalted love—love for a pure woman; such as I should not be, could I accept yours. It is capable of love, exclusive love, for a woman whom you could make all your own; it is capable of love, true and genuine love, for her who should be able to give you true and genuine love in return—which I never can."

"But why—why may I not hope that the force of the passion I feel for you, shall in time excite some pity, some tenderness towards me?" burst from the prince's lips. "Why did you encourage my hope by allowing me to come hither, to behold you in this soft, enchanting domesticity, to speak to you in this blessed privilege of home-freedom, and ease of privacy, if you felt not some touch of compassion, which may bid me presage future and farther relenting?"

"Forgive me, my lord, if I have indeed unwittingly caused you deeper pain by the step I have taken; but I could think of no other, than this, of perfect candor, to prove to you how high is my esteem and regard for yourself, and how anxiously I would preserve yours towards myself."

"You would fain persuade me of your esteem, and you withhold your love; you would accept my regard, while you reject my love! Be generous, lady; take what I lay at your feet; and give that which I covet. Love, love alone will satisfy me;—love bestowed and received."

"Dear prince, I do love you. I love your worth, your nobility of soul. But it is because I do love them, that I desire to see their treasures reserved; and not wasted upon one who has no affection with which to reward them,—one who is already a wife." Lady Capulet's voice sank to a whisper, as she uttered these last words.

"And yet it is said that he to whom she belongs, is but too insensible of her merit; that he devotes to idle gallantries, the time which he should dedicate to her perfections;" said the prince.

Lady Capulet writhed beneath this confirmation of the publicity to which her husband's preference for the society of other women had attained. But she would not let even this pang swerve her from the course she had resolved on. She paused for a second, as if to gather resolution; then added, with a firmer tone: "I will be entirely frank with you. I will give you incontestable proof that I do indeed tender your worth dearly, by trusting it with a secret; by confiding to you, my lord, my inmost heart, which has never been hitherto shown to a single human being, in the perfect unreserve that it is about to use towards you."

Her manner involuntarily betrayed so deep an emotion, that the prince's sympathy could only show itself in a silent and earnest respect.

"Pity me, my lord;" she said. "I love my husband; and I have too fatal reason to believe that he loves not me." Her head sank on her bosom; and a few tears of inexpressible bitterness fell from her eyes. In another moment she struggled to resume composure; the voice was saddened and tremulous,—though it gained firmness as she went on.—with which she said:—"You now know why it is impossible I can give you the passionate feeling which can alone duly reward that which you at present unhappily entertain for me, dear prince. I am too proud to sue, where I could wish to reign. The heart of the man I love must make me its mistress, by willing gift of itself to me; not

by cession. I cannot demand, what I even die to want; and if I am never to possess my husband's love, but by a mean appeal to his pity, I will go to my grave unblest. I can never cease to desire it; but I will never entreat for it. He shall never know from me, unsolicited by him, the love that exists in my heart. But as I feel that that love will ever exist; that no other love will ever supplant or extinguish it, so believe, dear friend, that I have no hope to offer you; and that I should have done an injury to your noble heart, had I not confided all to it, thus ingenuously."

The prince had no words for the fulness of his feelings; but his eyes, and the fervour of his manner, spoke sufficingly.

"Since I see that I have your sympathy, your interest in my behalf, dear prince, let me ask one comfort at your hands."

"It is your own generous heart, that in its kindliness, devises comfort for me, by telling me how I may minister to yours, dear lady;" murmured the prince.

"Well then, grant me this boon; let me have your friendship instead of the love, of which I confess myself unworthy; and to your friend make promise that you will use your best endeavour to withdraw your affection whence it at present harbours, that you may have the inestimable gift ready to bestow on the best and fairest lady you can find. To the end that you may make diligent search for such a woman, you shall give me your word that you will bid farewell to Verona for the space of a twelvemonth."

"You banish me then from your side?" said the young prince. "You talk of friendship,—of confidence in me; and you will not trust me."

"Be reasonable, dear friend;" she said gently. "Let us be honest with each other, and with ourselves. Such trust, is rashness,—hazard; not trust. It is no proof of kindness and confidence, to charge you with an onerous trial of fortitude—to burden you with a perpetual temptation Travel for a year. Return at the end of that period, if you will, to your friend; and tell her that change of scene, fresh ideas, have stimulated you to worthier ambitions, while they have been successful in effacing the old weakness."

"I shall but have to tell her that my friendship, call it how I may, is still, must ever be, love,—love alone;" sighed the prince.

"Believe me, dear, dear friend," said lady Capulet, with an earnestness that spoke her sincerity, "I would far rather find you anew devoted, than constant. Bring me a bride in your hand; and your old love will rejoice, as her and your true friend."

The prince shook his head. But her manner was too kind, and calmly affectionate, for him to offer one word in opposition to her expressed hope.

"I may never hope for such another opportunity of taking my leave unwitnessed, dearest lady. I cannot submit to part from you, in the presence of strangers, and in conventional form. After what has passed between us—after all your sweet candour, your gentle goodness—you must ever be a woman apart from all others in my heart and imagination. Let me bid you farewell at once. To-morrow I shall set out on my pilgrimage, in obedience to your wish. Heaven have you evermore in its care! And find some way, in its own wisdom, to bring consolation to your wounded heart, as you have to-day dealt consolingly and tenderly with mine. God bless you, beloved lady!"

The prince knelt at her feet; and straining her hand against his bosom, held it there, whilst he fixed his eyes upon hers in a mute leave-taking.

Lady Capulet could not refuse to their passionate supplication, the farewell token they besought; she stooped forward, and pressed her lips upon his eye-lids, as she echoed the valediction.

The prince, for one instant, passed his hand round her head, and drew her face closer against his own; then starting up without another word or look, he hurried away.

He had not been gone many minutes, when Capulet entered the room, with an open letter in his hand. He was in great perturbation; and in his usual exclamatory, incoherent way, gave vent to his agitation, stammering out its cause:—

"See here, my dear Angelica! This terrible letter! My poor friend! What must be his grief! And her unhappy mother, too! Ah! the

sweet, sweet Leonilda! So young, so light-hearted! To be snatched away in the very flower of her age! A flower! A very blossom!"

Lady Capulet turned deadly pale. "How, my lord? What mean you? Can it be that——" She gasped. She could not speak the terrible question.

"Too true! Too true! Alas, alas! The poor young thing! The sweet Leonilda! She is dead! My good Angelica; I see that thy kind heart feels this blow. I was too sudden in telling thee the news. The wretched parents! My poor friend! Too well he knew—but I must hasten to him. I have ordered horses—I shall set forth instantly, to carry what comfort I can, to my unhappy friend. He knew I loved her with well-nigh as fond and fatherly an affection as his own. Yes, yes, my presence will be a comfort—I will set forth at once. Lie thee down, gentle Angelica. Lie back on this couch. There, there! I did wrong to break the fatal news so abruptly to thee. I should have used more precaution. But who can think wisely in time of trouble? Not I, alas! my brain and heart are confused together. Let me place the child by thee; she hath not awakened with all this misery. Poor little innocent! Thou'rt ghastly white, kind wife; thy very lips are colorless. 'Tis thy good heart! I will send thy women to thine aid. Meantime, fare thee well, I must away. Thou thyself wilt bid me lose no moment, I know, in hastening to my poor friends.

Her husband stooped; kissed her forehead; and then bustled away, with tip-toe step, and fussy ostentation of quiet; in his own peculiar fashion.

Lady Capulet lay perfectly still. She had not fainted; but she was as if stunned, by the announcement of Leonilda's death. Could she doubt to whom this death was owing? Was it less her deed, than if she had dealt the stroke with her own hand? There had been no hint that the letter contained any allusion to violent, or suspiciously sudden death. But she remembered only too well, that Onofrio had distinctly said, the murder should be so effected, as to leave no trace of outrage. She was then a murderess!—a secret assassin!

The little Juliet, whom her father had placed on the couch beside

lady Capulet, now stirred and awoke. The child raised itself on its arm, and looked about; then seeing where it was, crawled, crowing and laughing, over its mother, and began patting her face, to coax her into a game of baby play. Shrinking from its innocent mirth and caresses, as something she had no right to indulge in,—blackened and guilty as she felt,—lady Capulet was relieved, when the nurse and other women attendants came into the room, to take away the little one, and to offer assistance.

She declined this latter, saying she had not swooned, but wished to remain where she was; desiring that she might be left perfectly undisturbed.

Her own women obediently withdrew; but the nurse, accustomed in her domestic capacity, and from indulgence, to have her own way, officiously insisted upon staying to cheer her poor lady with some remarks upon the calamity that had occurred.

"The messenger, who brought the letter to my lord, was taking a flask of wine, and a ration, after his hard ride.—well, sorrow's dry, and aqua vitæ moistens grief not amiss,—when I chanced to go below. Now I'm above mixing and consorting with the flirt-gills of maids, and saucy jacks and knaves of fellows, the lower-servants, being as I'm an upper-servant myself,—but sometimes for change, and for kindness' sake, I do go among 'em for an odd quarter-hour or so—so I heard the groom-messenger tell our Peter of the sad mishap of his young lady's death. Poor lamb! It seems she was found dead in her bed, as composed as you please. She must ha' died in her sleep, with a prayer in her mouth, for she was smiling like any angel, and her hands were folded like a saint's on a tombstone. No chrisom babe, safe be-hung with relics and pazienzi, is surer than she is, of going to Heaven,—rest her soul!"

"Pr'ythee, good nurse, leave me, I would fain be alone;" murmured lady Capulet.

"Well! we must all die, Lord knows; more's the pity. But for one so young, and so full of life and spirit, and so blooming,—the joy and very apple of her parents' eyes, as I may say, poor folks; 'twould ha' been well for them, if they, instead of her, had been called away!

But there's no picking rotten-ripe, nor yet mellow fruit, 'mongst those one 'd choose for Death's devouring. He hath a sweet tooth in his skull, and he'll e'en pluck the sweetest and freshest first, an' he takes the fancy. There was my own honey-tempered Susan, pretty pippin! a sweeter babe ne'er drew breath, so good, and so milk-mild! Well, she was too sweet for me. so Heaven let Death take her."

"In pity, good nurse, leave me for a season; I think I could rest;" again pleaded her mistress.

"Ay, do; we all have need of rest! 'Tis a sorrowful world! Heaven rest all Christian souls! Poor young lady! Well, grieving won't bring her back out of her grave!" And at length the nurse took her departure.

The instant she had left the room, lady Capulet got up from the couch, and staggered into the balcony that overhung their spacious gardens. Here she drew freer breath. She could bare her forehead to the cool air of evening; she could look forth upon the extent of lawn and grove; she could let her spirit range abroad, and her eyes wander into the blue sky, high and remote among the few stars, that were now beginning to shine forth. She seemed able to cast off that stifling oppression which had weighed upon her, whilst lying there, within the room. To woo yet farther this sense of relief. she left the house, and went forth into the garden; where she could join freedom of movement to freedom of breathing. The fresh air, together with the action, restored her to herself; and she continued for some time pacing up and down one of the broad paths, where the gentle plashing of a fountain was the only sound that broke the prevailing stillness. Evening deepened into night, and the stars had become myriad. ere the lady thought of resting. She instinctively wished to tire out her body, that it might become exhausted, and so her mind be compelled to find a respite with it, from the terrible unrest that kept possession of her. Just as she, at length, thought of allowing herself to sit for awhile, upon one of the garden-seats, a man stole from one of the covered alleys near to where she stood.

It was Onofrio.

She with difficulty suppressed a cry of horror, at the sight of him

"Begone! Murderer! ruffian! What do you here?" burst from her lips in vehement whisper.

"You have heard then?—you know,—you have learned, that fate hath——"

She scarcely listened to his words, in her agitation.

"Begone I say, villain!" she repeated. "How dar'st thou venture hither, after thy black deed? Begone, I say!"

She had put her hand before her eyes, or she would have seen the look of surprise that came upon his face.

"Not so, lady;" he said, after a moment's pause. "Why should I be gone, when I came expressly to tell you, that your wish is accomplished. She you hated, is removed from your path; the bearer of such tidings, should deserve welcome—reward—not reviling."

"Accurst the hour when first I beheld thee, fellow. It was thou who temptedst my soul astray, by offering the very means of evil, I could not otherwise have commanded. But for thee, I had been still guiltless."

"Be not so sure of that, madam;" said the fellow. "Once wish such evil may befal, and the soul is already on its way to seek the means. Had you not stumbled on myself to place them within your grasp, you would soon have hit upon other means of compassing your purpose. However, that may be, your purpose is accomplished—your ends are gained. It is fit that I should obtain mine. My object is more money. I cannot live without it—I must have it. So give me some."

"Dost thou dare to ask more of me?" said lady Capulet.

"Nay, madam, the purse you gave me when we spoke together in yonder old church, is empty—all gone. I must have more. I tell you, I cannot live without it; and I desire to live."

"How, villain? Dost thou think I will aid thee to live—I who know——"

"Tush, madam," interrupted Onofrio; "we both know that of each other, which makes it safest to agree together. I will deliver you of my presence,—which seems less welcome than I could have supposed, considering the news I bring,—and you will deliver me the sum I require."

"What is the sum you require?" said she, hastily.

"What have you about you, madam?" he said.

She drew forth her purse. He examined it quickly. "'Tis well filled—and with gold—it shall suffice; for the present, at least. Meantime, farewell, lady. I will not linger, both for mine own sake, and for yours; and moreover, for the sake of my promise to you, which I thus promptly keep, to show you good example for the future,—when we may meet again. Now, farewell!"

He was gone; and lady Capulet fled back to the house.

When Capulet returned home, his wife had the repeated agony of hearing all the circumstances of Leonilda's death related, with every variety of detail and comment.

He dwelt, with the sincere regret of a friend, mixed with all the mournful complacency of a gossip-lover, upon the particulars of the event, as well as upon the consequent grief of the parents, and the general consternation of the household. For it was awfully sudden at last, he said, although he and his friend, her poor father, had known for some time that it must happen.

In answer to the involuntary expression of surprise that escaped lady Capulet at these words of her husband's, he went on to explain, that, just previous to the conclusion of their first visit to Mantua, she might remember that Leonilda's father had been so much indisposed as to keep his bed; that this indisposition had been in consequence of his having learned from the physician who attended in the house, that the young, apparently so blooming, so healthful Leonilda, was the victim of a secret insidious disorder, which might carry her off at any given moment. That she had, in fact, a heart-disease, from which nothing could save her. That it was the knowledge of this circumstance confided by the unhappy father to himself, which had caused Capulet's settled melancholy, on the occasion of their leaving their friends' house. He told his wife that he had been enjoined, nay vowed to secrecy, by his friend, lest by any chance, the knowledge of her daughter's peril should reach the mother; and that this had been the reason of his never having breathed a word on the subject, even to her. He said that when he had last left Mantua,

his hopes had revived; for Leonilda had been so more than usually well and gay, that he could not believe her to be doomed to early death. He and his friend had succeeded in persuading each other, that the physician's fears had magnified the reality—certainly the imminence of the danger; and had accordingly indulged hopefuller thoughts, and higher spirits. But alas! The blow had fallen when least expected She had taken leave of her parents at night, all apparent health and animation; and in the morning, she was found dead. The features were calm—the limbs composed—but they had evidently been many hours cold. Unhappily, the help she might have had, when first seized, was not at hand; for it was found that her waiting-maid, Petronilla, who usually slept in the dressing-room adjoining her young lady's bed-chamber, had that very night absconded,—it was supposed, in company with a man of disreputable character, who had long been known to court the girl, and had often been caught lurking about the grounds. This last circumstance it was, which (joined to the confirmation afforded by her late interview with the villain himself) destroyed lady Capulet's scarce-born hope that Leonilda's death might, after all, have been owing to natural causes, and not to the murderous hand of Onofrio. She too well felt, that though the unhappy parents, and her own husband, had not a suspicion but that Leonilda had submitted to a decree of Heaven's will, in the mortal disorder with which it had seen fit to visit her,—yet that she alone knew the secret of her fate. She knew that Onofrio's connection with the treacherous Petronilla, had afforded the facile means of his entering her lady's sleeping-room, where he had doubtless effected his purpose, stopping her breath, as she lay, in her bed.

The lady was spared no item of the fearful detail. She was forced to hear over and over again all the minutiæ; from the pale face of the victim, when the body was discovered, and the despair of the father and mother, down to the amazement of her fellow-servants at Petronilla's flight. "And one of the strangest circumstances in the whole affair, is," Capulet would add, "that although not a doubt can be entertained, that the wench went off with the fellow,—robber, thief, and for aught I know, cut-throat as he may be—she did not touch a single article of her mis-

tress's property. Leonilda's jewel-case was unrifled—not so much as a grain of coral taken. What the girl's object, in leaving so kind a mistress as sweet Leonilda ever was, cannot be guessed at. But love, I suppose! It's the way with them all! The baggage could not resist a soft speech or two, I'll be bound. Like her betters! like her betters!"

But lady Capulet's severest trial was still to come. Her husband, in his kindly-meant endeavour to withdraw the afflicted parents from their brooding grief, entreated them to quit the monotony and seclusion of their own home, and come to his, for a time. He invited them to Verona, that its society, its stir, and animation, might afford a salutary distraction to their sorrow. The mere change of scene, he contended, would do them good. They yielded to their friend's urgency, and came.

It was the sight of them, which formed lady Capulet's cruelest penance. As she beheld those mourning habits, those woe-begone faces, the forlorn misery of those desolate parents, and conscience whispered to whom they owed their desolation, she could scarce endure the load of remorse that weighed her to the very earth. As she viewed their fresh burst of sorrow, at sight of the little Juliet, her heart smote her with the thought of who it was that had bereft them of their only child. She asked herself in the bitterness of her soul's self-reproach, how she deserved the blessing of a daughter, who had deprived this father and mother of theirs. Truly, her pangs were fierce enough, to punish even her guilt.

So little, however, is often guessed of the true springs of feeling, by human beings most nearly associated, that these throes of her accusing conscience passed for the emotions of generous sympathy; and raised lady Capulet in the eyes of her husband, for the evidence they gave of tenderness towards their unhappy friends in their distress. When her eyes were unable to meet theirs from inward reproof, she seemed but sharing their downcast sorrow; and while most self-abased and conscious of having caused their unhappiness, she looked most warmly penetrated with interest in its present sufferings. These tokens, as they

appeared to her friends themselves, of loving sympathy with their afflictions, on the part of lady Capulet, endeared her especially to them. They felt grateful and peculiarly soothed, that one who usually had the name of being somewhat lofty, reserved, and even cold in character, should show herself thus compassionate and tender in their behalf; and this preference, this gratitude of theirs, so ill merited, was an additional sting to lady Capulet.—another bitter drop in the penal draught she now daily and hourly swallowed.

Among the diversions which Capulet's well-intended zeal devised for the entertainment of his friends, was a gladiatorial exhibition to be given in the arena of the Verona amphitheatre. All the fashionable world were to be there; and he insisted that the sight, the society, the animation and excitement of the scene, would serve to revive and interest them. As usual, they yielded to the bustling precipitancy with which he always settled a point of this sort.

He made a large party of friends.—his own peculiar adherents, and favorite associates, which included an extensive circle. There were seats taken beforehand, for the occasion; and there was much bowing, and recognition, and friendly greeting, among the various parties, as they successively arrived, forming together, one vast concourse. The entire bulk of Verona's inhabitants seemed assembled there; the royal suite, consisting of the Scaligeri family,—then rulers in Verona,—occupied a sort of covered dais, or place of honor, erected over the principal entrance; the nobility and gentry filled the spacious ranges of seats, that encircled the amphitheatre; while the mob of commonalty, attendants, artizans, labourers, idlers, the poorer order of all kinds, were permitted to fill the standing-room, in the vomitories, or gateways, affording entrance to, or egress from, the amphitheatre.

Among some of the first arrivals in the vast assemblage, was Capulet's large party. As they were about to take their places, a sort of tumult arose. There was some misunderstanding, apparently, about the occupancy of certain seats, a mistake as to the order of time in their having been bespoken, a difference of opinion as to the right of precedency; it was scarcely discoverable, what was the precise origin of

the contention. But contention there evidently was. Tybalt's voice was heard high in dispute. Dissension swelled into quarrelling,—quarrelling into brawl. Taunts were bandied to and fro; threats were muttered and exchanged; defiance was hurled at each other; rapiers and poniards were drawn. It threatened to grow into a serious affray; when the arrival of the prince Escalus, and the rest of the royal party, stilled the disputants, and compelled them to give up the contest. It was generally whispered that the two great rival factions, the two principal houses in Verona—the Montagues and the Capulets—seized this opportunity of showing some of their scarce-smothered rancour against each other; but the majority of reports agreed in allowing that young Tybalt had been most rash and violent in his demostrations of insolence and stubbornness when asserting his right to the disputed places; while the youthful Romeo,—lord Montague's son,—had behaved with great spirit and temper; and that, indeed, it was mainly owing to his gallant forbearance, that the matter ended more amicably than might have been at first expected. Many agreed, that though a mere stripling in years, he had evinced the judgment and grace of a finished gentleman; and augured highly of his future excellence. These praises of young Montague seemed particularly to gall master Tybalt, who could not repress his ill-humour for some time after he had rejoined his uncle's party and taken his seat among them. He continued to vent disdainful mutterings against "that Romeo boy—that Montague fellow—who with the rest of his tribe, Benvolio, and the others, hold their heads so high. And all, forsooth, on account of their having got among their set, that lad Mercutio, a scape-grace; a good-for-nought; but because he can claim kindred with prince Escalus, must needs be esteemed a worthy companion, whose society is an honor. Why, we number among our set, a kinsman of the Prince's, too, if that be all; young Paris, a count, and a very king of good fellows. He never contradicts,—never opposes. He is a chum worth having. But as for Mercutio, that those chaps Romeo and Benvolio, are so proud of knowing, why he——"

"Come, come, let's have no more of this vulgar sneering; 'tis un-

seemly—'tis not gentlemanly—let's have no more of it, nephew;" said Capulet. "The lads are well-conducted lads, as I hear; though I take little heed of the Montagues, and their promising scions, any more than thou dost. Still let us treat them like gentlemen, while we meet only on neutral and social ground."

"Then I care not how soon I meet them on ground where I may tell them my mind plainly, with my hand and arm to enforce my plain meaning, uncle;" retorted Tybalt. "The open field would be the best ground I could meet them on, to give them a taste of my meanings—both mentally and bodily."

"Meantime, hold thy peace, until thou canst declare war, good cavaliero nephew; I tell thee this is no place for mutterings and defiance."

The youth bit his lips, to conceal his mortification at his uncle's rebuke; but he obeyed, and spoke no word more during the remainder of the show.

The sports in the arena proceeded.

Lady Capulet had her little girl upon her knee, the father having wished Juliet to be brought, thinking the show would amuse her. The mother had been sitting lost in thought, little attentive to the scene that was passing before her, when she suddenly felt the soft hand of her child against her cheek, drawing her face down to hearken, while she whispered:—"Mammina, who is yonder man, that keeps his staring eyes fixed upon us?"

Lady Capulet looked in the direction of Juliet's other hand, which pointed towards one of the vomitories nearest to the spot where they were seated. Among the crowd, she distinctly saw the man her child meant. It was Onofrio.

She felt herself turn sick and faint, and deadly white. She closed her eyes for a moment; struggling for composure, for strength, to prevent herself from swooning as she sat. Presently she heard her little one murmur, as if relieved at getting rid of an ugly sight:—"He's gone now. I'm glad."

She took courage to open her eyes, and turn them towards the spot he had so lately occupied. He was no longer there. And the mother, too, took a deep breath; of relief, of satisfaction.

The little Juliet had a remarkable shrinking from all disagreeable, painful, or offensive objects. She had none of the curiosity, or excitement, about distasteful things, that some children cannot help feeling. She seemed to have an instinctive avoidance for whatever could shock, or disgust, or displease her; while, on the contrary, towards aught that possessed beauty, or grace, in shape, color, or intrinsic quality, she was irresistibly attracted. She loved flowers; she was fond of smelling them, playing with them, and contrasting their varied form and hue. She loved all the beauties of sky and landscape; and took more pleasure in natural objects than a child of her age usually demonstrated. She liked, too, looking at pictures She took a fancy to all handsome, pleasant-mannered people; and hung about those who were soft-voiced, gentle, and kind. She was never shy with strangers; excepting with those who were forbidding, either in person or behaviour. She manifested her preferences in a very ingenuous, unmistakeable mode; and would hold up her rosy mouth in thanks, or wind her little arms around the neck of those to whom she was partial.

But return to the amphitheatre. During the continuance of the entertainment, lady Capulet saw no more of the face that had so struck her child, even at first sight; and herself, on only too fatal a recognition. But at the close, as their party were making their way through the crowd, to their coaches; there, in the midst of the throng, the lady again beheld Onofrio. He was evidently watching for her. Their eyes met; and she vainly endeavoured to master the agitation that took possession of her. He made no attempt, however, to address her, but stood motionless; apparently, merely one of the gazing idlers, who loitered there to see the grandees pass to their equipages. But she had nearly betrayed herself, by the mingled terror, shame, and anger, that burned within her, when she saw the ruffian actually come in contact with those two unhappy parents, whom he had rendered childless. To her unspeakable abhorrence, both of herself and of him, she saw the fellow, as they passed close to the spot where he stood, instead of receding, and withdrawing from their path, suffered them to touch him,—him who had been their daughter's murderer.

Had her life depended on it, she could not have forborne the withering glance she cast upon the villain for his hardened audacity; but he did not seem to heed it. His hard mahogany face preserved the same unmoved look, with which he had regarded her from the first.

Some days elapsed; and then their Mantuan friends besought Capulet and his lady to excuse them, but they could no longer conceal from themselves that their own home was after all the only place where they could hope to find resignation beneath their load of sorrow; solitude, seclusion, they said, best assorted with their withered hopes; and that if any chance of restored serenity remained for them, it was there they must seek it. They thanked his friendly zeal for the cure it had sought to effect; but they felt it was a vain expectation.

There was no gainsaying these bruised and broken hearts. They took leave of their friends; and on both sides, it was felt that the farewell; was in all probability, eternal.

Full of the thoughts to which their departure gave fresh poignancy, lady Capulet rambled slowly along the banks of the Adige. She had been taking her little girl an evening walk by the river side, attended only by her nurse, to carry the child, when it was tired of being on its feet. The lady's fit of abstraction, had rendered her no very amusing companion; and the little Juliet receiving few answers from her mother, to her lively questions, had lingered behind to prattle with her nurse. They were thus, some considerable distance in the rear of her, when lady Capulet was startled from her reverie, by a well-known voice not far from her. Her eyes had been fixed on the ground, in her deep musing, but though she raised them, and cast them hurriedly around, she could see no one. But she heard the voice of Onofrio say:—"I am near to you, but I do not step from my concealment, for your sake, as you would probably not care to have me seen by other eyes than your own. Send the child and her attendant away; I must speak with you."

"By what right, dare you dictate thus to me?" and she trembled as much with resentment, as with fear.

"You know best by what right. I need not remind you of the parley in the old church—of the night conference in your own garden—of her whom you——"

"Be silent!" she exclaimed. Then, turning, she met the nurse, who was advancing with the child in her arms. The little Juliet, partly by dint of talking and walking, partly owing to the fresh air from the water, was looking sleepy, and was drowsily leaning her head upon the nurse's shoulder.

Lady Capulet took advantage of this circumstance to bid her woman hasten home with the child, that it might not risk taking cold by sleeping in the open air.

As the nurse obeyed and returned quickly to the house, lady Capulet thought. "How low am I fallen, when a paltry excuse, a mean subterfuge is seized, to evade a servant's observation! O, fatal first step in guilt! To what vile and pitiful shifts as to what enormity of crime may you lead!"

Onofrio stood beside her.

"Best waste no time, lady, for your sake, and mine own. We may be seen, and neither you nor I, care to attract curious eyes."

There was something in the way in which the fellow always contrived to remind her of the hold he had upon her, from the circumstance which had associated them, by speaking of her and himself thus together, in a tone of joint equality, and familiar ease, particularly goading to the lofty lady Capulet. But she repressed the words which arose to her lips in reproof of his manner.

"I want more money—much more;" he went on. "I must have enough to last me some time; for there's hard ado to get at you, when I need fresh supplies. I saw you up yonder at the amphitheatre, t'other day; but I had too much consideration for a lady's scruples, to address you before all your fine friends. I have some generous feeling for you—for you have shown me some,—nay, much. But you must reward me for my forbearance. If you want me not to haunt your steps, to dog your path, at every turn, you must make it worth my while,—you must put it in mine own power,—to keep away. Give me money enough to live upon, far from here."

"What sum will suffice?" she said.

He named a large one.

"I have not nearly so much with me. Do you imagine that I carry a sum in my purse, that might tempt a chance robber to way-lay me, as well as be at hand to satisfy the extortion of a known ruffian?"

"Neither taunts, nor hard names shall move me from my purpose, madam. You are welcome to use them; they are some ease to the heart, I know. So out with them, as often, and with as many of them, as you choose; but consider whether it be for your own advantage, to stay bandying them here with me, at the hazard of incurring eaves-droppers' notice."

"If I consent to give you the sum you ask, where and how can I convey it to you?" she asked.

"I will make that sure, lady. You have a key to the garden-gate which, I know, admits you from this river-side walk to your own grounds. I have too long prowled about them, for some time past, in hope of meeting you a second night, walking abroad as before, not to know every lawn, grove, terrace, and gate, in the whole range of gardens. I will follow you thither. I will take your promise that you lose no time in going straight to the house, to your own room; that you will provide yourself with the sum I have named, and return without delay to the close embowered-alley, by the fountain,—the spot where we met once before. Give me your word that you will do this, and I will pledge mine in return, to carry all discreetly, and to leave you in peace for a long space of time—for as long a space, as I can make make my money eke out a living."

"And if I refuse to comply with the terms of this infamous exaction?" said lady Capulet.

"I shall know how to make my claims heard;" he said promptly and calmly. "I shall know how to gain them more numerous auditors, as well as more attentive listeners, than the lady who hath the spirit to employ an assassin, but the meanness to grudge him his hire. Fetch the money, madam; you had best, depend on't—for both our sakes."

They had reached the garden-gate he had alluded to, by this time. Lady Capulet entered; sped to her own room; took from her cabinet the amount demanded (for her husband's wealth, and lavish allowance caused

her to be never unfurnished with a considerable sum); found Onofrio where she had appointed; and giving it into his hands, was once again freed from his presence.

Time passed. Months, years, passed; and at length, so long a space of time elapsed, without lady Capulet's having seen or heard anything more of Onofrio, that she gradually allowed herself to indulge the hope of being indeed released from that accusing presence,—of being freed once and for ever, by his death. The first time this thought flashed upon her, she felt as though a dread shadow had been removed from her path through life,—as though a blessed light of comfort, and renewed strength were shed upon her existence. It seemed as if now she could look up with a cheerful trust, that future good resolves and acts should be permitted to expiate former errors of intention and of deed. She felt that she could commence in earnest, and with the encouragement and solace which virtuous purpose inspires, a new course of moral being. Time had worked its sobering effect upon the passions which had so agitated her soul in early youth. She grew reconciled to her position; nay, satisfied with the attachments that were hers. She learned to look for happiness from the affections, instead of perpetually craving after an ideal regard. She was now contented to accept the affectionate esteem, the kindness, the indulgence of her husband, in lieu of that warmth of love, that refined and exclusive preference, which her girlish heart and imagination had so pined for. She came to take pride and interest in the development of that matchless beauty in her young daughter, which manifested itself more and more with each year, rather than to indulge, as formerly, in her own engrossing thoughts, and self-contemplative feelings.

Juliet's loveliness of person, while still a mere girl, was remarkable. She inherited her mother's strikingly beautiful features, with more softness of expression; her perfection of shape, and dignity of mien, with even yet more of winning grace, and suavity in motion. Her father, too, was a handsome man; his limbs were elegantly turned; he had

white, well-shaped hands, and small dapper feet; he possessed a certain aristocratic bearing, and conventional elegance of demeanour (when in society, and not bustling and fussing amid domesticities), which were very prepossessing. All the most attractive points in her father, Juliet inherited, together with those which distinguished her mother; while in herself, her parents' personal advantages shone with an added charm of their own. She would have been a celebrated beauty already; had not the accustomed retirement of a young Italian maiden's life, detained her hitherto from general gaze. Her father's mansion, its garden grounds, formed the limits to her sphere of existence. Here she dreamed away her life, in a succession of smiling hours; a child in thought, a child in feeling, a child in pursuit and amusement.

One morning a friend of lady Capulet's came to pay her a visit; and began telling her with much eagerness about a matter, which, she said, she had greatly at heart.

"I own I wish to carry this point, my dear lady Capulet;" said her friend; "and I want your aid, as together, I feel sure, we shall succeed. I think you will feel with me, that the poor young thing has been aggrieved by this unwarrantable report; and if it be allowed to gain ground, by any show of credence on the part of us Verona ladies, her character is lost."

"But, my dear friend, you have not yet told me of whom you are speaking; nor the circumstances which interest you in her behalf, and which are to interest me;" said lady Capulet, smiling.

"Ah! just like my giddy head! My heart always whirls it round and round, and away from the subject it ought to keep to. The more my heart takes a settled interest in any matter, the more it unsettles my head. Let's see! where ought I to begin! Oh.—you must know that there is a charming young creature, named Virginia di Coralba (sweet name, isn't it? her very name, as I say, seems to bespeak her purity.) lately arrived in Verona. She is, it seems, an orphan, a rich heiress (by the way I forget where her estates lie—but somewhere in Calabria, I think she says), travelling about for the benefit of her health, which has suffered much, I understand, from grief at the loss of

her parents. Well, would you believe it, my dear creature, that from Venice (where last she was staying for a time), there have come certain whispers, which, if believed, would be highly prejudicial to the character of this sweet young woman. Now I have been introduced to her (by my husband, who met some distant connections of hers in the south, he says, when he made a tour there, some years ago, as a young man); and from what I see of her, and hear of her (for she talks with such charming discretion and modesty, and plays the lute like an angel), I won't believe one word of these scandalous tales. To show that I won't, and don't, I'm determined to visit her, and to take all my lady-friends to visit her. Now, your rank, your position in society, my dear, dear lady Capulet, make you all-powerful. Once give your notice, your countenance and support, to this poor young lady, and her title to general respect and consideration are confirmed. Who would dare to breathe a word against the reputation of any one, whom lady Capulet chooses to visit? All sinister whispers would die away of themselves, the very first time your coach is seen at her door. Let me beseech you, grant me the kindness to order it at once; and let me take you thither. I came for the very purpose. I am dying to have you see her. I know the impression she will produce upon you will confirm mine. How I am running on! But as I say, my heart always runs off with my head. I own I am enthusiastic for the sweet Virginia; and so will you be, when you see and hear her."

Lady Capulet, though amused at her friend, the lady Anatolia's eagerness, consented to her wish; and the two ladies set forth at once to the superb mansion, which the signora Coralba had hired for her residence during her intended sojourn at Verona.

"Does such a place as this look like the lodging an adventuress would choose?" said the lady Anatolia triumphantly, as the coach drove through the entrance to the court-yard. "Adventuresses seldom possess such wealth as this argues, I think?"

"It proves the young lady rich, certainly, as far as the command of money goes;" said lady Capulet quietly.

"She will prove herself rich in all else;" answered lady Anatolia;

"in virtue, in discretion, in beauty, in accomplishment. Reserve your judgment until you have seen and heard her; that is all I ask."

The interview with Virginia di Coralba crowned the anticipations of her warm partizan. The lady Anatolia was more than satisfied with its effect. Lady Capulet, who had been prepared to allow somewhat for the exaggerated enthusiasm of her friend, could not resist the combination of beauty, soft manners, and attractive claims to her favor, presented in the person of the fair stranger. A face and person almost childish in their waxen complexion, and infantine slightness; a long sweep of flaxen ringlets; eyes, in color, like tourquoise; a mouth like a rose-bud; a shrinking timidity of speech, a humility of voice, a shy glance, a hesitating gesture, made the modesty of her appearance and demeanour amount nearly to bashfulness, in its pretty, submissive, deprecating appeal.

Her two lady-visitors went away charmed with her; and lady Anatolia was scarce more loquacious in her favour now, than the generally somewhat taciturn lady Capulet.

She seemed quite struck with the fair orphan, and took a lively interest in the difficulties of her position. She warmly espoused her cause, enlisting all the ladies of her acquaintance to show her countenance and encouragement, by their visits and invitations. She was rather surprised to find that her husband took no part in her enthusiasm on the subject. On the contrary, when she had offered to take him with her, the next time she should call upon signora Coralba, and introduce him, he had showed no disposition to go; but had more than once afterwards avoided accompanying her thither. She thought this strange caprice in one who had always hitherto evinced curiosity and interest at the slightest mention of a pretty woman; but she settled the question in her own mind, by deciding that he had conceived some prejudice against the young lady; for once, while she was descanting upon the loveliness of the fascinating Virginia, and persuading a lady of her acquaintance, to join her in negativing the sinister reports, vowing that she did not credit one of them, Capulet had dropped a few words, advising her not to be so vehement in her advocacy of a stranger, of whom, after all, he remarked, she knew nothing.

His wife, indignant at anything that sounded like an insinuation against her charming Coralba, would not listen to a covert attack; but urged him to speak out openly, if he had heard anything against her. But Capulet, as if repenting of having said even thus much, attempted to laugh it off, alleging that he meant nothing by his speech.

"It is really too unjust, the way in which detraction assails the most helpless, and the most innocent;" continued lady Capulet, turning to her acquaintance. "The merest whisper of slander suffices to sully the reputation of a defenceless girl; yet envy scruples not to breathe it against one whose only real crime in their eyes is, her undeniable wealth, beauty, and gentleness. Capulet began to fidget about the room; and at length took his stand at an open window, a little apart from where the two ladies sat conversing. "To let you know one of her many excellencies, I will tell you, that I understand she has a brother,—an unhappy, afflicted, deformed, deaf-and-dumb brother, whom she takes about with her from place to place, wherever she goes, that he may benefit by the change of scene and air."

Capulet twitched the blossoms from a flowering myrtle that stood in the balcony, near to the open window, at which he was standing; and, as his wife went on, he rubbed them into pellets, dropping them through his fingers, and strewing the ground beneath.

"Virginia herself owned it to me," continued lady Capulet; "and, with tears in her soft blue eyes, confided to me all about this deaf-and-dumb brother."

The crushed blossoms were vigorously pelted against the edge of the balcony.

"What, there is a mystery about him?" enquired the lady acquaintance.

"A terrible one;" said lady Capulet. "It seems that he is not only hideous in form,—crooked and deformed; but so loathly in countenance,—frightfully distorted, and covered with a leprous crust as it is,—that he perpetually wears a large dark mantle, enshrouding and enveloping him from head to foot, and a mask upon his face. Out of compassion to humanity, which would be involuntarily shocked and outraged by the

sight of such ultra hideousness, even while it pitied the object himself, the unhappy orphans hit upon this method of sparing the feelings of others, while they indulged their own wish to be together; for Virginia vows she will never forsake her miserable brother; and he is, of course, devotedly grateful to her, and would follow her throughout the world."

"A terrible mystery indeed—a fatal secret cause of sorrow, for one so lovely and so interesting as you describe her to be," said the lady. "Poor young thing!"

"Beautiful, patient, generous Virginia!" exclaimed lady Capulet. "And this is the creature a malicious world would defame! A self-denying martyr! One who sacrifices all to sisterly affection. I would stake my reputation on the faith of hers; and feel that I could almost hazard my life to defend her innocence!"

Capulet jerked the remainder of the pellets high up into the air, scattering them far and wide, as he abruptly quitted the window, and whisked out of the room.

The more lady Capulet saw of Virginia di Coralba, the more infatuated she became with her. The sentimental tone the young lady always used in speaking of her unfortunate brother, seemed to lady Capulet the acmé of generous tenderness.

In the intimate and frequent communion that now took place between them,—no day passing without lady Capulet's spending a portion of it with the fair stranger,—she, of course, often saw this brother; that is, as much of him as could be seen. He fully answered the description she had heard of him. He usually sat, huddled in his dark cloak, close-hooded, masked, mute, and apart, unable to take the least share in the conversation. Virginia would speak of him, in his presence, without the least reserve, as his deafness prevented his feelings being hurt by any allusions to his afflicted state.

"Never, no never, will I give up hoping that time, and change, may restore my unhappy brother to himself and to me. I never will consent to cease cherishing the belief, that some blessed day, he may be cured of his fearful complication of infirmities, so that he shall be able to con-

front his fellow-beings,—to take his place among humanity. Now, my own delicacy and his, urge this veiling of our afflictions from the public eye. But the moment may come—nay, shall come—when that blighted form—that disfigured face—those uninformed ears, and silent lips, shall be redeemed from the shroud, to which, living, they have been hitherto doomed."

"Preserve that pious hope, dear Virginia;" said lady Capulet, in a tone of sympathy. "But," continued she, in a lower voice, "are you quite sure no sense of hearing lingers?—are you certain no sound reaches him? I fancied I saw an involuntary movement—a slight start—when you alluded to his calamity."

"Not a syllable—not a breath, alas!" sighed Virginia, "e'er makes its way to those sealed portals. I am compelled to write down all I would say to him."

She drew a small set of tablets, that lay upon the table, towards her as she spoke, and hastily wrote upon them, "Give me your hand, dear brother!"

She held the words before the masked face.

A hand was protruded from the folds of the mantle; and Virginia clasped it fondly, covering it with kisses. Then she held it for awhile in both hers, looking upon it with streaming eyes, and murmuring, "Dear, dear brother! Endeared, by thy afflictions, beyond all brothers! Dearer than ever brother was to sister!"

As lady Capulet threw a glance of curiosity towards this hand, to see whether it bore any evidence of the deformity which blighted his person, she was struck by a singular mark it bore. Immediately below the knuckles, in the centre of the back of the hand, was a deep empurpled scar, cut in the shape of a cross. It was precisely, in shape, hue, and position, similar to one which she had often remarked on the hand of signor Vitruvio, her friend, lady Anatolia's husband; who had received the wound which was its origin, in a duel he had once fought. As her eyes fixed upon this remarkable scar, she perceived the hand struggle, as if to disengage itself from Virginia's hold.

"Strange!" she could not help inwardly exclaiming. The impres-

sion haunted her. As she drove homeward, she could not help recurring to the circumstance, and musing upon it deeply. She had bidden her coachman take her a somewhat longer drive than usual, that she might have opportunity to ponder the matter. Suddenly she desired him to take her as speedily as possible, to the house of her friend Anatolia

"Is the lady Anatolia at home?"

"Yes, madam."

"Signor Vitruvio?"

"No, madam. My master has been abroad the whole morning."

"'Tis no matter. I will see them this evening. Bid my coachman proceed the way I first told him."

As she resumed her drive, the thought perpetually reverted.

"Surely never were two marks so singular, yet so precisely alike! On the left hand, too! And then the consciousness apparent in the movement! Strange!"

That evening, when she met her friends, she took care to look particularly at Vitruvio's left hand. She observed that he kept his glove on, for the most part; but in partaking of some iced coffee that was served, he drew it off; and then she had an opportunity of scanning the scar minutely. The scrutiny but confirmed the wonderful identity in the appearance of the mark on the hand of her friend's husband, and on that which had been put forth from the dark cloak which enshrouded Virginia's deaf-and-dumb brother.

Again and again, she repeated to herself:—"Strange! Can it be possible! Can I have been deceived in her? And poor Anatolia!—So enthusiastic—so generously unmistrustful! Can you be playing her false, sly signor Vitruvio? Could your introduction of the Coralba to your unsuspecting wife, be a mere husband's artifice—a man's trick upon woman's simplicity? I shall see Virginia again to-morrow; and it shall go hard, but I'll get another sight of her brother's left hand."

But before lady Capulet paid her visit to the fair Coralba the next morning; it so happened, that the lady Anatolia called, at an hour still earlier.

The brother sat as usual, muffled, and apparently unnoting.

"Is not your poor brother dull, sometimes, my dear creature?" asked Anatolia of Virginia. "How sadly he must lack amusement, cut off as he is from the usual resources of mankind, among their fellow-men."

"He generally contrives to find entertainment from watching the passers-by from that window, where he usually sits, you see;" answered she. "Besides, he and I, when we are alone, have this means of interchanging our thoughts;" and she took up the tablets.

"Well, to be sure writing is something—but talking is worth a million of jotting down one's passing fancies;" said the lady Anatolia. "Scarce any one's will bear that. I'm sure mine run on in such a stream —such a bubbling stream.—so airy, and so shallow, too, I fear,—that it would never do to turn them into the sobriety of ink."

"Ah! but the consolation of conveying ideas to one who can get them through no other medium," sighed Virginia, as she wrote down:—"We love each other, do we not, my brother, though we have no other means than this, of uttering our feelings?"

She held the lines before the masked visage; and then a hand came from beneath the mantle, and wrote beneath:—"No brother could love —no brother hath the reason to love—his sister, as I love my Virginia"

The eyes of the lady Anatolia happened to fall upon the hand which inscribed this sentence; and she could hardly believe what they beheld, when she saw upon the middle finger, a very peculiar ring, which was exactly like one that her friend's husband, Capulet, constantly wore. She looked at it carefully; and felt more and more assured of the precise similarity.

"Very extraordinary!" thought she, after she had taken leave, and was driving away from the house. "Can we after all have been deceived in this Virginia! I know that my friend's husband is reputed a man of gallantry; but surely, this would be too bold an intrigue even for his enterprise. Pshaw! impossible! How could it be? I am dreaming! My silly head is off at a tangent as usual, at the mere sight of a ring—a bauble!"

As her carriage left the Coralba's door-way, lady Capulet's equipage drove up. "I have brought you some flowers, Virginia;" she said, as

she entered the saloon, where the brother and sister sat together. "I fancied your brother would take pleasure in their beauty and perfume."

"Like your kind heart to devise means of delight for one whose unhappy state leaves him so few;" replied Virginia. Then she wrote on the tablets:—"The amiable lady Capulet has brought hither flowers from her garden, for thy express behoof, my brother."

She held up the tablets, and tendered the flowers. A hand was stretched forth to receive them. It was the left hand; and lady Capulet's eyes fastened upon it. But no scar was there. It was white and unblemished.

She leaned back in her chair, bewildered, and uncertain what to think; while Virginia wrote another sentence:—"Will you not write your thanks, dear brother, to the gentle lady who hath had this kind thought for thee?"

But the tablets were hastily rejected by the left hand,—and with no answer written in return.

Virginia made some farther effort to induce her brother's compliance; but he seemed as if he either could not or would not understand her wish. Shortly after, lady Capulet arose, and took her leave.

She had no sooner quitted the room, than Virginia di Coralba exclaimed in a voice which vainly sought to preserve its usual honied accents of bland deference, and soft timidity:—"Why, what in Lucifer's name, could induce you to withhold compliance with my hint? How came you not to write when I bade you?"

"Softly, fair Coralba!" said the gentleman in the mask. "This confounded ring would have betrayed me. She would infallibly have recognized it, and then we had both been lost, for she is——"

"Pshaw!" interrupted Virginia. "Why could you not pull off the ring, under your cloak?"

"It is tight for me; I snatched, and plucked, and pulled at it, but in vain. It wouldn't come off, all I could do. Besides, if it had, she would have known my handwriting, for——"

"So then, she would have seen characters that have often met her eye in the form of an amorous billet?" laughed Virginia scornfully. "She is one of your worship's old flames, is she?"

"She is my wife!" replied the gentleman. "And I am a sorry villain in my own eyes, to have wronged a generous unsuspicious nature, that shows disinterested kindness to a supposed orphan brother and sister ill-used by nature and by the world,—for the sake of one who is an embodied falsehood; with the tongue of a virago in a mouth of meal; her very name's a mockery. Virginia! Coralba! Herself as hollow an unreality as her sham brother! 'Deformed,' quotha!" exclaimed he, flinging off the mantle; "'Foul-visaged!'" chucking the mask on the table; "'Deaf-and-dumb!'"

"And so she is thy wife?" said Virginia, in a tone of mingled derision and triumph. "I knew I could not be mistaken; I discerned thee for one of the married herd, or thou hadst ne'er been admitted of my train. A pretty fellow to rail at me as a falsehood, a deceit! Pray what art thou? A sweet figure thou cut'st here, of truth and honor,—of fidelity to thy wife, of faith to me. Didst not palm thyself off a gay young bachelor,—a free man,—a devoted gallant? And these are the fellows,—these husbands, these demure rascals, these hypocrite knaves,—who denounce a wife, for a word, a look given to another than to him who hath bought up, with church fees, the exclusive right and title to herself and all she possesses; while they reserve to themselves the privilege of indulging in amusement wherever it offers, and of rating their entertainers for lightness and falsehood, when they tire of them. But I weary of thee, man. Get thee gone; let me see no more of thee."

"I'll tell thee what, fair mistress, an' thou dost not——"

"Begone, I say!" interrupted she, with so unmistakeable a decision of tone and gesture, pointing to the door as she spoke, that Capulet thought fit to tarry no longer; but straightway walked out.

His wife had meanwhile driven to her friend the lady Anatolia, and arranged with her, that they would go together on the morrow to the house of the Coralba, keep a close watch upon her and her muffled brother, during their visit, and compare notes afterwards of their observation; since they mutually confessed they began to have their suspicious of the fair-seeming Virginia, and her mysterious relation.

As lady Capulet was proceeding homewards, her coach was for a few

moments detained by some passing obstruction, from a knot of people, gathered to enjoy the humours of a puppet-show, exhibiting at the corner of a street. Looking out to see the cause of the halt, her eyes fell upon a face and figure, which, through all the change that years had wrought, she instantly recognized. They were those of Onofrio. The fierce black eyes were dulled and hollow; the mahogany face was of a sallower hue; the jet beard that encircled his cheeks and throat was now grizzled; and his form was bent, and shrunken. But there was no mistaking the hardened look, the bronze determination, that characterised the whole man.

Lady Capulet shrank back. But he had seen her In another second, he was at the coach-window; his face horribly near to her own, as he rapidly whispered:—"Be in your garden,—near the fountain,—at midnight Come provided; and fail not, as you hold sacred the memory of Leonilda!"

The utterance of that name, which had so long been a mute terror to her thought, completed the overwhelming effect of Onofrio's sudden reappearance, after she had suffered herself to indulge the hope of never again beholding him; and lady Capulet sank half fainting upon the cushions of her coach. The next moment it moved forwards; and the man was out of sight.

The interview at night in the garden,—for she dared not withhold it,—was a repetition of those which had formerly taken place; and the result, money extorted from her dread of discovery. Onofrio's protracted absence was explained, by his owning that he had been condemned, for some minor offence in which he had been detected (his identity with the malefactor who had before escaped, being unknown to the local authorities who had passed sentence upon him),—to seven years' labour as a galley-slave.

He was once more at large,—free to haunt her as before; and lady Capulet felt her life again darkened. At any moment she was subject to the shame of these secret meetings with a ruffian; or to the still more intolerable disgrace of his disclosures.

Her wan countenance, and swollen eyes, spoke plainly next morning

to her friend Anatolia, of a disturbed mind, and restless night. "Can poor Angelica have any suspicion of the part her faithless spouse has been enacting in this farce, which the spotless Virginia and her afflicted brother have, I fear me, been playing off upon us Verona ladies? I should have paid more heed to the rumours from Venice; at any rate have enquired farther into their source, before I so resolutely set myself to discredit them. But my foolish enthusiasm! my runaway heart and head!"

It was singular, that lady Capulet, who had formerly suffered such tortures of jealousy on groundless occasions, should now entertain no shadow of mistrust. The conviction of the injustice she had done Capulet in the case of both Giacinta and Leonilda, together with the salutary teaching engendered of remorse, had greatly contributed to her present freedom from misgiving. But partly because few passions so effectually blind the judgment of its victims as jealousy, partly because men are naturally more guarded where there is an amour, than where they feel an honest liking, certain it is, that lady Capulet never for one instant glanced towards her husband, when her eyes were opened to the true character of the pseudo Virginia di Coralba. The two ladies found this artless young creature hanging over her brother, turning the leaves of a portfolio of drawings, for his entertainment.

Lady Capulet said;—"I have brought some more flowers for your brother, my dear, since he seemed pleased with those, the other day;" and without waiting for the ceremony of the tablets, she held them at once towards the muffled figure.

A hand—a left hand—was promptly stretched forth to receive them.

"No scar!" thought lady Capulet. Aloud, she said:—"your brother is miraculously cured of his deafness! I give you joy, Virginia."

Virginia shook her head. "I fear his hearing is no better, madam. He must have seen the nosegay in your hand; he has a keen sight for flowers; he loves them so." She sighed with a pretty deploring air.

"You are fond of flowers then, sir?" wrote lady Anatolia on the tablets; which she placed open before the masked man. A hand came forth, and wrote down reply:—"Beyond expression,—far beyond my poor powers of expression!"

"No ring!" thought lady Anatolia. Then she added aloud:—"Virginia, my dear. I have planned a charming scheme for the enjoyment of your brother; and indeed, I trust we shall all find much diversion in it. I mean to have all my favorite friends of the party. It is, to go to a country-seat on the Adige, belonging to signor Vitruvio and myself, where there are flowers in profusion, for the delight of your poor brother, and where the rest of us will, I hope, find a few days' agreeable repose from the gaieties and bustle of Verona. What say you, my dear?"

"You are only too good, sweet madam;" replied Virginia di Coralba. "But alas! I fear that my dear brother will be unable to——"

"Tut, tut!" interrupted lady Anatolia, rising to take leave; "I will take no denial, my dear. So be prepared to give us your company to-morrow, when my friend lady Capulet and I will call for you in my coach. Addio! A rivedersi!"

No sooner had the two ladies left the room, than the gentleman in the cloak, sprang from his seat, threw back the hood, plucked off the mask, and burst into a fit of merriment.

The laughing features were neither those of the grave signor Vitruvio, nor of the middle-aged Capulet. They were those of a young gallant, scarce arrived at manhood; so light was the down on his lip, so sparkling and boylike the mirth in his roguish eyes, so thoughtless and careless his whole bearing. He seemed as though frolic,—the love of jest—the light spirits of youth, were his sole guide, his only rule of action.

"And how wilt thou contrive now, fair plotter?" he said. "Thou canst not carry on the disguise for days together, beneath their very eyes—at least, I cannot; it hath well-nigh stifled me already. Ouf!" exclaimed he, as he cast away the cloak. "Fairly caught in thine own springe, my dainty woodhen!" he continued. "Own thyself foiled, at length, by these quiet ladies. 'Faith, they more than suspect thee already, I believe; for didst thou see how they scanned thy deaf-and-dumb brother? If their eyes had had the gift to pierce the folds of my mantle, the keenness of the glance which they fastened thereon would have riddled it through and through, like an arrow-shot."

"I will yet foil them, not they me!" exclaimed Virginia. "When those women come to-morrow, they shall find the bird, they thought to snare, flown. Till now, I have had no thought but vengeance; henceforth, I will have none save love. Share my flight,—you have no tie here,—go with me to some far-away place where we may live to each other, forgetful of aught that may have crossed us hitherto. I will no longer be known as Virginia di Coralba; you shall adopt some other name than Mercutio"

"Nay, few are the crosses I have either to look back to, or to turn my back upon;" returned the youth. And, as thou say'st, few ties. But one or two I have, which I would fain not break. I have a generous friend and kinsman in the Prince: two favorite companions in a couple of lads yeleped Romeo and Benvolio; who, though sober-sided youths, yet have a something about them, that would make me loath to leave them. But for thyself, fair Coralba; tell me, 'beseech thee, what vengeance thou talkedst of but now; tell me something of thy story; tell me what malicious devil it is that looks out of thine eye, when thou speak'st the words 'those women.'"

"It is because I glory in tricking and befooling them to their very faces. It has been the aim of my life to entrap as many of their precious mates from them as may be. For it was one of these prudes, these wives, these wedlock purities, these church bargains, these honest women, forsooth, who defrauded me of the only man's heart I ever cared to possess. In the hour of my agony, when I discovered the wrong she had done me, I vowed to revenge myself upon her whole married sisterhood; and I have already succeeded in immolating a hecatomb of deluded wives upon the altar of my hatred to that one. By the device of disguising all my lovers, in turn, as an afflicted brother, too hideous to be looked upon, I have managed to evade prying eyes, and to preserve tolerably intact that reputation which was essential to my success with such respectable personages as I had in view,—to my plans of inveigling demure husbands, and of hoodwinking prudent wives."

"How can'st thou to encourage a miserable bachelor fellow like myself, pretty mistress?" said her companion; "I have no wife whom thou

may'st add to thy dupes and victims. What mad'st thou care to enlist a poor single devil 'mongst thy train of bewitched husbands?"

"Thy favor hath a singular resemblance to his, of whom I was beguiled. It was thy likeness to my youthful first love, that attracted me to thee. Just such a gay dauntless spirit sat sparkling in his eyes, as shines from thine. The others I have allured,—I have sought to win; but thou hast won me. Vow that thou wilt be constant to me, and I swear to give up all future thought of conquest for revenge-sake, or for aught else; and will devote myself wholly and solely to thee."

"Gramercy for thy kind intention, fair Coralba;" said the youth, laughing; "but knowing, as I do, that I can boast no iota of steadiness in all my madcap composition, I were a pre-perjured villain to vow constancy. I cannot, nor I will not feign. Take it how thou wilt. While the fancy lasts, I am thine. When it ceases, I am mine,—mine own man again."

"Heartless trifler!" exclaimed the lady.

"Not so, madam; I trifle not; I speak the truth. But to palates used to the high-flavoured draught, flattery, plain well-water truth seems insipid offence. I crave pardon for commending it to those pretty lips So, a sugar touch of them to sweeten it, and to take the taste out of both our mouths!"

"I have done with casual caresses forever, either to give or to receive;" said she vehemently. "Give me yours, once for all; or not at all!"

"Then 'not at all' for me, fair dame;" said he, taking up his plumed cap. "'Once for all' is too solemn a pledge for a roving blade who loves his liberty beyond aught else. Liberty of tongue, liberty of look, liberty of foot, liberty of love, liberty of thought, word, and deed for me! Whereupon, I kiss your hands, fair lady."

"Not even my hand, fair sir;" she said, drawing it angrily away from him, as he attempted to snatch it to his lips.

"As you will, pretty tyrant. I am not for persevering against a lady's wish. Her favor must be mine by her own good grace, or I seek not to secure it; I shall be admitted to salute even her hand, by her own sweet granting, or I touch it not. I have no courage 'gainst disin-

clination. I cannot strive for reluctant liking. She must be a willing woman, who is a winning woman to me. I submit to your decree. We are henceforth strangers,—enemies, if so you ordain it. Save you, fair foe!"

He bowed and withdrew.

The lady Anatolia had no sooner stepped, with lady Capulet, into her coach, than she said, in her usual parenthetical style :—"I have a scheme to unmask this creature, (who, I fear, is nothing more nor less than an adventuress, after all, my dear friend.) and her brother also. I have my shrewd suspicions that he is not what he seems, any more than she, with her languishing looks, and her soft speech. I shall ask both our husbands to accompany us, without telling them whom they are to meet; and then we can have their unbiassed opinions, and observation, to confirm our own. How say you?"

"I think your plan is good, if you can bring it to bear;" answered lady Capulet; mentally adding, "Poor Anatolia! How unsuspecting she is! I wonder whether signor Vitruvio will indeed be there."

And as this passed through her mind, her friend was thinking :—"Poor Angelica! How guileless she is! What if her wretch should send an excuse, and not come?"

But the experiment was never tried; for, on the following day, Virginia di Coralba had disappeared from Verona.

Some months elapsed unmarked by any new event, when one evening as lady Capulet was returning from vespers, through the by-street that lay between the old church and her own gardens, a paper was hastily thrust into her hand by some person, who, directly afterwards, darted down a turning near, and was lost to sight. She could not distinguish anything of the figure, in the deepening twilight, and in the transient glance she obtained; she only felt certain that it was not Onofrio himself, though she could scarce doubt but that it was some emissary from him, when she opened the paper, and read as follows :—"As you are a christian woman, come to a dying wretch, whose soul cannot release itself from fleshly shackles, until it has told you that which has burdened it for years."

The paper was a foul blotted scrawl; well-nigh illegible. It contained, besides these words, the direction to a miserable lodging-house, in one of the lowest quarters of Verona. He was dying, then! That was the idea paramount in her thought. He was dying.—and she should now at length be securely freed from the one bane of her existence. To witness his very death-agony would loose its terrors for her imagination, in the feeling that thus she possessed assurance he could never again cross her path. The horror of beholding him expire before her, would be merged in the exultation of knowing she need never more dread him, alive,—a living witness against her. It was such thoughts as these that nerved her to the task of setting forth alone, to find the place indicated in the paper. She muffled herself in a plain dark dress and veil; the absence of her husband at a large party, and her daughter's early hour of retiring to rest, affording her the opportunity of leaving home unobserved under favor of nightfall. She was not long in reaching the street she sought; for she walked fast, both to avoid notice, and to keep pace with the hurry of her mind. It seemed strange to her, a lady accustomed to all the attendance and luxuries of her rank, to be walking alone by night; here, among the obscure haunts of poverty. Poverty in its decent struggles, and its despairing recklessness; its cares, its wretchedness, its squalor; its laborious industry, its idleness and vice; in all its various phases, poverty here met her view at every step. There were groups sitting in doorways, breathing the night air cooled by darkness; it made its way down the close, narrow street, as well as it could, between the tall blocks of houses; and in the absence of the sun's rays, it seemed to come refreshingly. Lady Capulet looked up at the strip of deep blue sky, thick-set with stars, that appeared through the narrow crevices formed by the confined street, with a sense of relief at the calm elevation of that sight, contrasted with the pent turmoil below, the scene around her. There were blinking lights within the ground-floor rooms; seen through dingy curtains partly drawn back from doorways which they had served to screen all day. The glimpses into these interiors presented different scenes in succession. Now a laughing party seated round a supper-table, noisy, but good-humoured, making coarse fare pleas-

ant by sociality ; now a solitary woman watching her husband's return, rocking her cradle with her foot, while her hands were employed with a distaff and spindle ; next, a set of men drinking wine out of flasks and skins, while a crowding together of eager heads, and a clamour of voices proclaimed that they were deep in the game of mora ; anon, a shop-full of polenta-buyers ; farther on, a solitary barber, lounging in his doorway beneath the shadow of his pole, his dangling brass bason, and his roof-tree ; next to him, a fruit-woman chaffering with a customer ; and next an assemblage of earnest talkers. At the house which was the object of her search, lady Capulet found the lower room fitted up as a sort of shop, but traffic seemed not the object of its present occupiers, who were numerous, and engaged in an animated discussion, the gist of which was utterly incomprehensible to any but themselves, from the jargon in which it was carried on, the screaming key in which all the voices were pitched, and from the circumstance of their all being at full talk together. The lady did not stop, either to ask questions, or to state her errand. The apartment, and the story it occupied in the house, had been all minutely set down ; so she went straight up the crazy staircase, until she came to the door of the room in question.

It was ajar,—either left open for the admission of air, or from the carelessness of the last person who had gone out. Lady Capulet tapped softly.

"Avanti!" responded a feeble voice. It was a woman's ; and lady Capulet thought she must have made some mistake in the room. But she entered. The room was in darkness, save what feeble glimmer made its way through the rents in the tattered window-curtain ; not undrawn, though the heat and glare of day had passed Enough of the place was visible, to show that it was of the meanest description. Barely tables and chairs were there ; a miserable bedstead of the most sordid description occupied one corner, and on this, lay stretched the person who had bid lady Capulet enter. The woman made a faint attempt to raise herself upon her arm ; but the effort was beyond her strength, and she sank back, with a hollow cough, and a moan of pain.

"I fear I have disturbed you ; this is not the room I was directed to,—

you are not the person I seek.—the person who summoned me;" said lady Capulet; "I fear I am mistaken."

"Your voice tells me you are right;" gasped the woman. "Though so many years have passed since I heard it—I remember it." She paused; checked by a fit of coughing that seemed to tear her asunder; then resumed. "Draw back the curtain, madam; though the noonday sun itself would make it no clearer to me, that you are lady Capulet. Your voice suffices. But I would have you cast what light the sky affords, upon my face, that you may see if you can behold in it aught of one you saw many times, years ago."

Lady Capulet, wondering,—for the woman's voice had yielded no clue to her remembrance,—drew aside the curtain. The stars shed sufficient light to enable her to distinguish an emaciated form, haggard looks, and a pallid face; in each cheek a hectic spot, and the muscles of the mouth drawn back with the lips, in that fatal drag, peculiar to deep decline. But in nothing of all this, could she discern a single trace of any one whom she remembered to have seen.

The woman perceived how totally she was unrecognized. She sighed; and through her almost incessant cough, which pierced lady Capulet's heart with its ill-omened sound, said:—"'Tis as I thought; care, disappointment, remorse, even more than years, have blotted out all that once made my lord, your husband, call Petronilla the prettiest lass in Mantua."

"Petronilla!" exclaimed lady Capulet.

"Even she;" replied the dying woman. "She whom you once knew a brisk, cheerful girl, without a thought of care, without a dream of ill; now the broken, guilty, dying creature you see."

She strove to suppress her racking cough, as she went on:—"But it is because I am guilty, and know how insupportable the sense of guilt is,—it is because I am dying, and would fain have the solace of doing one good deed ere I die, that I have entreated you hither. Listen; when you first saw me, madam, I was in the service of the young lady Leonilda. You shrink from that name; but bear the present pain for the sake of after comfort. In an unhappy hour, one festa-day, I met with Onofrio.

His flattery, his handsome person, the persevering court he paid to me, won my girlish heart. I fell madly in love with him; and once he had discovered this, I was wholly in his power. From what you know of Onofrio, madam, I need not tell you, that with him, to know his power, is to use it."

For some moments the harassing cough overmastered her; when she had succeeded in stifling it, Petronilla continued:—"When obliged to fly for his life, after stabbing the young rake who insulted me, Onofrio, in my anguish at parting, obtained my ready promise, that if ever he escaped alive, and returned to claim me, I would become his wife. His love for me was, I believe, the one sincere and master passion of his life. Had it not been for my belief in that, I should have died—I should have destroyed myself long since. He did return. It was after his first encountering you, madam. It happened at that time that I had conceived a strong resentment against my young mistress, from some imagined affront that she had put upon me. I fancied that she treated me with unwarrantable caprice,—injustice.—I know not what, now; but then it appeared to me unpardonable, unbearable. In this mood he found me; and in this mood, he had little difficulty in persuading me, not only to leave her service and to marry him; but to revenge the ill-treatment, I believed myself to have sustained, by carrying off her jewels, which we might convert into money sufficient for us to live upon in some distant place. He also got me to promise that I would admit him into the house, on the night we had fixed for our flight, after the family had retired to rest. He did not explain what was his purpose in this; but I afterwards learned his fatal intent."

Lady Capulet's eyes were fixed upon Petronilla's lips, as though she would have forestalled every word they uttered, ere well formed. She scarce breathed, in the intensity of her eagerness to gather each syllable that came gasping forth.

"I sat that night, counting the hours as they crept on towards the appointed time, in the little dressing-room adjoining the one in which my young lady slept;" continued Petronilla. "I strove to cherish my wrath, to stimulate my resentment against her, by recalling all the cir-

cumstances of the conduct by which I had thought myself aggrieved. I sought to strengthen myself in the belief that I was justified in leaving her, in defrauding her, and in escaping from dependance on her tyranny, to independence with the man I loved. But I could not entirely succeed in stifling something within, which told me I was about to commit that which I should repent my whole life long having done. It drew towards midnight; and that was the time fixed by Onofrio. To rouse myself from the misgivings that were fast creeping over me, I resolved to sit thinking there no longer, but to fetch the jewel-case, and set it ready for carrying away. It always stood in my young lady's room; on a small porphyry table near her bedside. I stole into the chamber on tip-toe. I listened, to make sure, by her breathing, that she slept. Not a sound,—not a breath, reached my ear. I approached nearer. On her bed she lay. The stillness was beyond that of sleep. There was no mistaking that blank silence, that marble immobility. Appalled, I drew back. The next instant, I desperately laid my hand upon her; not the slightest motion heaved the bosom. I caught at her arm; it was cold, and fell heavily from my grasp. I should have screamed aloud in my horror, but that its very extremity paralysed me; and a moment after, I heard Onofrio's signal I hurried out to him; and attempted wildly to draw him from the spot. He was struck by the disorder of my manner. In incoherent words I told him what had happened. 'No time to take you into the house now,' I said, 'let us fly at once—whither you will—I cannot look upon that pale dead face again.' 'Dost mean to say, she is certainly dead, my girl?' he exclaimed; 'art sure of it?' 'But too sure!' I replied. 'Leave wringing of thy hands;' said he; 'fate hath brought about that, which otherwise must have fallen to my share. Fortune hath done me one good turn, in requital of the many scurvy tricks she hath played me, and made me play. This night's chance hath spared me a villainy. I am quite as well content to be without the burden of that young creature's death,—mocking wench though she was,—upon my soul.'"

"All-merciful Heaven, I thank thee for removing its burden from mine!" murmured lady Capulet.

"I understood not the full meaning of Onofrio's words, then;" Petronilla went on; "but afterwards, when he found that I had, in the shock of discovering Leonilda's death, left the jewel-case behind me, he told me how destitute of resources he was; how impossible it was to him to obtain a livelihood by any honest means, since his character was blasted beyond redemption; and he ended by confiding to me without reserve his whole position. I then learned to what a man I had linked my fate; but he gave me so many proofs of the strong attachment he had for me, and I loved him with so passionate a fondness, that even that discovery failed to make me regret my having become his. He made no secret to me of what had passed between yourself and him, madam; and he told me he should go immediately to Verona, that he might by being the first to inform you of Leonilda's death, endeavour to obtain a reward for his welcome tidings, which should afford us means of subsistence for a time."

"I believed that he claimed that reward as her murderer;" shuddered lady Capulet.

"To his surprise, he found this;" returned Petronilla. "He found that you did not know her death had occurred naturally, but imagined it to have been the work of his hand. A mistake so favourable to his views, was not to be corrected. He allowed you to remain in your error, and continued, from time to time, to make it the means of extorting money from your fears. When he was seized and condemned to the galleys, I accompanied him. I say nothing of those weary years. They passed. We wandered back to Mantua, old in disgrace and misery. Some short time since, he brought me to this neighbourhood, that he might be near, to work afresh upon your fears, madam. He again tried, and succeeded. With the sum he obtained on that occasion, he set out for Mantua, on some scheme of building a fortune with a young fellow, who had worked with him, chained to the same oar, and who had been freed from his term of condemnation at the same period as himself. Before Onofrio left me, I used all my efforts to persuade him, as I had many times done before, to confess all to you, madam; to relieve your conscience of the load that burdened it, and to throw him-

self upon your generosity for the future. He would not listen to me; but, laughing at me for a faint-hearted wench, left me, bidding me keep up my spirits, and prepare to receive him with full health and smiles when he should return, as he speedily hoped to do, a rich man."

Petronilla paused; checked in her speech by a violent convulsion of coughing; then resumed:—"I had been some time declining. On his leaving me, I rapidly grew worse; and within this day or two, I have felt that I shall never recover. Since the moment I became convinced of this, I have been haunted with a desire that you should know the truth concerning Leonilda's death. Within view of the grave, I have learned to see many things clearly revealed to me, which formerly struck me only passingly, indistinctly. I have learned to see my own follies and weaknesses in their full measure of evil consequence; I have learned to feel compassion for other erring souls; I have come to desire nothing more earnestly, as a hope of expiation for my own misdeeds, than to carry comfort to at least one wounded conscience, and to relieve it from a sense of deeper stain than in truth attaches to it. Let my soul in its parting hour have the one solace, madam, of knowing it hath whispered peace to yours. Let my love for Onofrio have this one virtuous deed to hallow it; by making him, through me, do you this poor justice."

"May he not, when he returns, resent this generous step on your part, my poor girl?" said lady Capulet. "I would not that your courageous thought for me, should endanger your own safety or peace."

"My safety and peace, both, will by that time be beyond all human power to affect;" said the dying woman. "Neither Onofrio's praise, nor Onofrio's blame, will then avail to work their old influence on Petronilla. I know not whether he will be pleased or displeased at the step I have taken; but it will then be past recall, and he is not one to spend much lament upon things done and gone. I shall leave him a few words of farewell; I shall tell him what I have done, and I shall tell him that it was an ease to my heart in my dying hour; and I think I know enough of Onofrio's love, to assure me that will suffice with him. He will forgive his Petronilla all in that moment. He will then

remember only what we have been to each other, through our struggles, our disgraces, our mutual discomforts and comfort."

She paused again; and a look of fond thought dwelt for a few moments upon her countenance. Then she went on:—"He will know, madam, that it is now in vain to make any future attempt upon your dread of discovery. He is henceforth in your power, not you in his; but I trust to your honor, that you will never use it against him, in return for the voluntary reparation I have made you this night. I do not ask you to pledge me your word, lady; I know that you will never let my avowal bring harm upon him I love." She fixed her eyes as she spoke, upon lady Capulet; who replied to their earnest appeal, by volunteering her promise that Onofrio should be safe from her betrayal, so long as he left her unmolested.

Petronilla endeavoured to express her thanks, but exhausted by her long recital, she was unable to do more than look her gratitude; and lady Capulet, after making all the arrangements in her power for the comfort of the dying woman, bade her farewell, blessing her for the ineffable consolation she had bestowed.

Passionate temperaments such as lady Capulet's, are strangely affected by sudden chances of joy or sorrow, by consolation or anxiety. Lady Capulet had sustained many violent emotions with comparative calm, on former occasions. She had succeeded in stifling and concealing her jealous misery; she had hidden from all eyes her tumult of solicitude, her anguish of remorse; she had borne with firmness all this, and had even maintained her health of body untouched by these struggles of mind. But now, all at once, the tide of unaccustomed inward satisfaction, the sense of freedom, of release from guilty fears and self-reproach, acted upon her with overwhelming force, and she fell ill from pure reaction of feeling.

On the morrow she was in a high fever; and for some days her physicians declared her life was in danger. It was then that the affection with which her husband really regarded her, showed forth in all its strength of demonstration. That love, of which she had entertained so many torturing doubts, was now unequivocally declared; that love,

which, while she was well and apparently happy, was content to show itself only in a good-natured easy kindness, and indulgence,—to exist in undisplayful liking, passive approval, and silent content,—now betrayed its full force of passionate attachment, in the moment of alarm at the thought of losing her. But she lay unconscious of his very presence, neither hearing his lamentations, nor beholding his irrepressible tears; she lay utterly insensible to all that would have excited such a new torrent of grateful emotion could she have witnessed it, knowing its cause.

The physicians, fearful of the agitating effects which it would have on their patient, should she suddenly become aware of her husband's presence, and perceive his uncontrollable grief, had prevailed upon Capulet to retire to his own room, while the sleep into which his wife had at length subsided, was allowed to have its full chance for composing and restoring her. They owned to him that this was the crisis of her disorder; from which she would, in all probability, awake either to renewed life, or sink into eternal rest.

Capulet suffered them to lead him away; and Juliet, who had been sedulous in watching her mother's sick-bed, was induced at the same time to go with her nurse to her own chamber and endeavour to take some repose.

From her deep slumber the lady at length awoke. The room was hushed. The very attendant who was stationed there to watch, had fallen into a doze. Lady Capulet raised herself in her bed, and looked around. She strove to recall the cause of her being thus; she found she must have been ill—ill for some time—dangerously ill, though now she felt wonderfully revived,—strong,—and able to think clearly. She remembered the circumstances which had preceded her illness; she thought upon the important revelation of the dying Petronilla, which had been providentially permitted to lighten her soul of its load of guilt; she thought of the resolution it had inspired within herself to make avowal of all to her husband. She felt that she owed the candour of confession in return for the boon which confession had been to her. She recollected how nearly death had stepped in to prevent this intended act of expia-

tion; and she was seized with irresistible longing to lose no moment now in fulfilling it. She got up, threw on a dressing-gown, her excited mood enduing her with strange power to support herself. She took her way straight to her husband's room, which lay in the same corridor. She pushed open the door, which moved noiselessly; and beheld him seated with his back towards her, his face buried in his hands, weeping in all that despairful abandonment, so terrible to witness in man. On the table beside him stood an open casket; and before him lay a miniature. A sudden faintness overpowered lady Capulet, and she leaned against the doorway. She well remembered having once seen her husband place a miniature in this casket; and but too well recalled the many jealous pangs it had cost her subsequently, when she had chanced to note the casket, and to speculate on what woman's picture it contained, so carefully enshrined there by him. There was a revulsion of all the tender thoughts which had possessed her on first seeing him buried in grief; she had believed that those tears might be caused by her danger, that it was the fear of losing her which so moved him. But now the terrible idea suggested itself—could it be an old memory revived? Could it be regret, that just as he was about to be free, to be released from wedlock thraldom, the original of the miniature no longer lived, to share and bless his liberty? Could it be Giacinta? Leonilda? Desperately she resolved to know the truth. She staggered silently to his side, and saw—a portrait of herself.

She dropped at his feet, clasping his knees, her head resting on them, in a transport of happy gratitude. Capulet, in amazement, raised her to his arms, pouring forth a torrent of questions.

She replied by a full confession of the history of her heart, from its first girlish idolatry, its misgivings, its waning hopes, its fears, its jealous rage, its weaknesses, its guilty purposes. Her husband, in turn, told her, in his own half-vain, half good-hearted way, how that he had never seriously loved but her; how he might have had his youthful follies before marriage; how he had become weaned from them by the surpassing loveliness of the beautiful young creature whom her father's friendship had bestowed upon him for a wife; and smilingly showed

her the miniature of herself, which, in the time of his early married adoration, he had had executed by a young artist, who painted it from memory; how her reserve had constrained him to a less demonstrative affection, than he might otherwise have shown; how her coldness of manner had chilled him to a corresponding appearance of indifference very little accordant with the passionate warmth of admiration with which she really inspired him; but that fancying it best pleased her, had acquiesced in the calm and friendly regard of conduct which gradually established itself between them. He told her how his attachment for her had kept him always a constant husband; and that, notwithstanding the license of Italian manners, he had never felt tempted to the slightest infidelity, save in the instance of his passing infatuation for Virginia di Coralba. He said he told her of this, that there might not now exist the shadow of reserve between them; and then he took from the casket certain relics of by-gone bachelor flirtations—scented billets, fragments of faded nosegays—an odd ring, or locket, and such trifling knacks, offering to destroy them before her face, to show his wife how valueless they had become in his eyes.

Lady Capulet had much too generous a spirit, had had too bitter an experience of true jealousy, and had moreover received far too deep a lesson of self-discipline, to permit her entertaining a moment's uneasiness upon such grounds as these. She would not hear of her husband's proposal; but playfully told him she would have him preserve the mementos of his youthful gallantries, as trophies of her own conquest and triumph.

As a proof how entirely cured she was of her former jealous meannesses, and how true was the reformation her own character had undergone, her reflections upon the subject of the adventuress, Virginia, di Coralba, were full of candour, and forbearance. She felt the admonition that was to be drawn from her own blindness on that occasion; she felt that this single instance of her husband's forgetting what was due to herself and him, was mainly owing to her own apparent caprice and inexplicable reserve of conduct,—to her own coldness and unsociable abstraction, while constantly employed in brooding over her own

suspicions, and unhallowed resentments ; she felt that by such moods women naturally estrange their husbands from themselves, and teach them to look for more agreeable companionship elsewhere ; in short, she exchanged the intemperance, the irrationality of jealousy, for the peace and joy of confiding love ; and lady Capulet was from that time a happy wife and woman. Shortly after this, she had the pleasure of receiving a letter from the Florentine prince. It was dated Palermo ; and ran thus :—

" Beloved friend,

" So long as my rebellious heart would not admit itself to the extinction of those hopes you had enjoined it to abandon, and indulge those new ones you had taught it to form as its true base of happiness, I would not give you the pain of hearing from me But now I have learned how truly you foretold that my nature was capable of receiving its best joy from a pure passion, and that mutuality of love which could not exist where I ventured to aspire before, I no longer refrain from writing to you ; but call upon you to rejoice with me, as I know your noble heart will, in the fact of my having attained this knowledge. A certain fair Sicilian lady, daughter to the viceroy here, taught me first to think it possible you might be right. She is now hanging over my shoulder, as I write, bidding me tell you how earnestly she joins in my gratitude towards that noble woman, who treated an inexperienced heart in its rashness but sincerity of passion, with tender consideration, with gentleness, with kindly inducement to better self-knowledge. She bids me thank and bless the generous woman, who subdued her own feelings, who sacrificed her own scruples of delicacy, that she might, by a confession of her own unreturned passion, effectually extinguish any lurking hope which might mislead, and prevent the substitution and growth of wiser love in the breast of him who had cherished a presumptuous one. My young wife glories with me, in attributing our present mutual happiness to the high-souled and unselfish ingenuousness of your conduct on that occasion. Had you coldly contented yourself with rebuking my presumptuous passion, in lieu of confiding to me the cause of its utter hopelessness, and leading me to

believe that it might be hereafter replaced by a hopeful love for a legitimate object. I might never have learned to look for that happier fate which I now enjoy with my Sicilian bride. Let me tell you that she hath the same glorious dark eyes—the same majesty with sweetness of aspect—that same witchery of blended dignity and gentleness of mien that first entranced me, and bound me thrall to a certain beauty of Verona. Had not my fair Sicilian reminded me a thousand ways of her who was my first love, of her who must ever live enthroned in my heart as the noblest of women, she had never succeeded in impressing anew that heart which you had enjoined to love again. It hath been my happy fate to win the esteem of the two most generous women upon earth; for my wife is never better pleased than when I tell her of those beauties most resembling Angelica's. Dear friend, think of us ever, as two happy beings, gladly owing our happiness to you; and, if it may be, send us assurance you are not unhappy yourself, that our joy may be perfect."

It may be believed with what sincere and eager delight lady Capulet responded to this letter, by the tidings that she now as fully enjoyed the treasure of her husband's undoubted and undivided love, as she or they could desire. She concluded her letter with the words:—My dear lord is sitting beside me; his arm is about me, as I write; he will but take the pen from me to assure you, in his name as well as mine, how entirely we are, dear friends,

Your loving friends,

Angelica.
Capulet."

And now it was, that lady Capulet had leisure of mind to devote in thought and companionship, to her young daughter. Hitherto, she had been so absorbed in her own reflections, that she had given but sparing and intermittent attention to Juliet. There had been between them but little of the sympathy and intimate communion usually subsisting between a mother and daughter. With parents severally so engrossed in their own pursuits,—the mother in her secret cares,—the father in his social

pleasures,—it came that the young Juliet had been thrown almost wholly on her own resources for the development of her ideas. She had been brought up in the style of seclusion and retirement usual for a young Italian lady. Her intercourse had been strictly limited to the members of her own family, and their household. From earliest childhood she had been in the habit of seeing her father at his breakfast-hour, before he went out to his rounds of visiting; and had invariably been brought to bid him good night, when he happened to be in the house at her own early bed-time. He had good-naturedly frolicked with her, when some party did not call him away, and took pride and joy in marking her growth, her beauty and grace of person. Her mother had had her in the room with her while she embroidered, or sat at home; but for the most part, the little creature had played about at her feet, while lady Capulet silently pursued her occupation, lost in thought; and as the child grew into the young girl, the hours she spent in her mother's room, had passed scarcely less silently; for the lively questions that naturally sprang to her lips, learned to restrain themselves from utterance, when, through a course of years, they met with but monosyllables, or short sentences spoken abstractedly, in reply. Gradually, her communion with both father and mother became almost entirely restricted to the wonted periodical salutes, exchanged between Italian parent and child, when she kissed, first their cheeks, and then their hands, on bidding them good morning,—after meal-time,—and before retiring to rest.

She was fond of her cousin Tybalt; but his active pursuits, and pugnacious disposition, took him much abroad,—to the fencing-school, to the sports of his fellow-youths, to the taking part in their quarrels, and frequently to the fomenting of their differences,—so that he made but little of a companion to her, in her girlish tastes, and her stay-at-home resources.

Juliet's most constant associate was the nurse; who had been her foster-mother in babyhood, her attendant in childhood, and still maintained her situation about her person, from the circumstances which had induced lord and lady Capulet to give her a home in their household, and from her own strong attachment to her young lady. Once, when

there had been a talk of engaging a waiting-maid, the nurse was highly affronted; exclaiming:—"Ought not I to know how to dress thee, better than any tire-woman of them all? I, who bore thee——in my arms? I, who shared my own Susan's milk with thee? I, who weaned thee, when my good man—rest his merry soul!—stood by? Well, there's no standing 'gainst a tottering wall, when an earthquake bids it jog,—and us be jogging! But e'en in falling stones, is Heaven's mercy! It took both the merry heart, and the little one too good for this earth, to its own rest,—rest their souls!"

The person whom Juliet held in chiefest reverence as her friend and counsellor, was her spiritual director, her confessor, a certain holy man, called friar Lawrence, a brother of the Franciscan order. In his quiet cell, kneeling at his feet, pouring out her innocent soul in humility and contrition for offences, fancied rather than actual, this young girl gained teaching from his wisdom, help and strength from his virtue, steadfastness and courage from his moral admonition. With him she learned to perceive and partially to analyse the feelings, the impulses, the aspirations within her. With him she attained something of self-consciousness; something of that interior understanding, that auto-comprehension which teaches us our own individuality, as sentient, thinking beings. Very little of this was hers; but what little she had, was gained through the gentle teachings of friar Lawrence. She felt this, without perhaps being aware of it,—far less, reasoning on it; but what she felt, sufficed to give her a sense of reliance, of sustaining confidence in his counsel and friendship; and made her find some of her happiest hours, those she spent in the good friar's cell.

Juliet was by no means an intellectual girl either from nature, or from training. She inherited a susceptible disposition from her father,—a man of gallantry and pleasure. From her mother,—a woman of strong though suppressed feeling, all the more concentrated, for her lofty and reserved exterior,—she inherited a sensitive, passionate temperament. Her parents' several native qualifications and habits, unfitted them for the development of their young daughter's mind; and it has rarely been the usage in Italy to bestow much cultivation on a young maiden's mental acquirements, from external sources,—from masters.

Juliet's refinement sprang from herself. She had a natural affinity with the beautiful in all things. She had an innate perception of the beautiful and the voluptuous in both Nature and Art. It was through this intense appreciation of beauty, that her refinement existed. Her heart informed her mind. It might be said, that her feelings, rather than her understanding, thought. Profoundly impressionable,—her senses and instincts were more at work than any mental process. Her soul was elevated by its native purity, and affinity with beauty, rather than by any inspiration or effort of intellect. Her religion was one of sentiment rather than of conviction,—of impulse, not reason. She knelt at the good friar's feet with all the implicit reverence, the unquestioning faith, the passive credence, of a child; she let him judge for her, rather than used judgment of her own; and took for granted, unscrutinized, all that he said, or made her subscribe to.

It was this passionate sense of beauty in all existing things,—whether of Heaven's creation, or of man's ingenuity, that supplied Juliet with food for her ideality of feeling; and entirely precluded any sense of dullness or weariness in the retired and monotonous life which had been hers. She felt no want of society, while she had the glorious face of Nature to look upon in loving companionship; she scarcely missed human associates, while she revelled in contemplation of sky, and earth; shadow, and sunshine; morning light, and starry evenings; the broad expanse of her father's garden-grounds, the partial glimpse of the impetuous Adige, the distant purple of the mountains, sole boundary to a scene affording wide scope to the imagination. Her father's indulgence had given her a range of apartments, in one wing of the palace, that commanded a magnificent view from one of the large balconies that opened from her own peculiar chamber. This balcony was a favorite resort of Juliet's. It was here that she filled her soul with happy contemplation. It was here that,—no reader,—she fed her thoughts with things, rather than with studies, and gained ideas from objects, instead of from books. She learned wondrous secrets from tree, and shrub, and flower; she heaped up strange lore from noontide rays, and the soft moonbeams; she stored up innumerable fancies from

the ever-dancing waters of the fountain, from the growth of blossoms, from the ripening of fruit, from watching the flights, the careerings, the hoverings, of birds and their nestlings; from listening to the lark's upsoaring rush of song, and to the luxuriant melody of the nightingale.

In her favorite room hung several pictures, that furnished her with Art-beauty of ideas. The only child and heiress of a wealthy nobleman, it may be believed that her suite of rooms lacked no adornment that money could command. There were massive silken hangings; tasteful furniture; the walls were hung with paintings; and in the niches stood groups of statuary. Two pictures had an especial charm for her. The first showed Mary in the garden, approaching Him as a simple gardener, who was her Master and her Lord. It represented the moment, when His voice, uttering her name, revealed to her the sacred Presence in which she stood; there was expressed in her figure all the awe, the heart-struck reverence of the sudden recognition, while in His, was all of good and benign impersonated. It was a presentment of human imperfection with perfect love; of the divine spirit of Hope and Beatitude. The other was a painting of a holy legend, showing an aged man,—a saint grown old in self-denial and in the exercise of virtue,—led on by an angel. The emaciated countenance of the poor, worn-out piece of mortality, was raised in meek hope, Heavenward, while the angel, in whose bright face shone immortal youth and happiness, pointed towards the sky, and cast a look of compassion and superhuman intelligence of comfort upon the suffering saint, now so soon to be released from his earthly probation. These two pictures formed an unfailing resource to Juliet, when in a humour for reflection. In other moods of feeling, there was a picture she delighted to look upon; allowing her imagination to take free range amid the exquisite fancies it suggested. It was a woodland scene; an embowered thicket deep within the recesses of a forest. On the grass lay the queen of beauty and of love,—Venus herself; beside her was the young Adonis; unheeded stood his courser impatiently chafing, and champing the bit, eager to be away with his master to the chase; all as unheeded stood

his leashed and coupled hounds, and his boar-spear flung aside. It might have been a defect in the painter, failing to tell the story aright; but there was no reluctance visible in the face of Adonis; it was turned towards that of his enamoured mistress; the eyes of both were mutually engaged; and the lovers seemed all in all to each other, within the green seclusion of that forest-dell.

Among the sculptured marbles, were some that forcibly appealed to the sense of beauty and grace, which was Juliet's predominant characteristic. There was one of Galatea and her nymphs; their rounded limbs emerging from the fresh and crested waves; while the face of the goddess looked radiantly towards the land, where she knew awaited her coming her shepherd-love, Acis. There was one that showed the pair of fate-linked lovers, borne onward upon the hell-wind; sad Paolo and Francesca. And one there was, in relievo, where Aurora flew, scattering flowers, before the ramping steeds of Apollo, hastening to unfold the golden gates of the east. Amid such objects, Juliet cherished her love of the beautiful. Unaided, her own inclination for whatever was fit and lovely, indued her with discernment, discrimination, and appreciative admiration; unenlightened by a single rule or theory, she gathered new perceptions, and acquired a confirmed taste. Thus, her native tendency to whatsoever contained elements of harmony and beauty, engendered its own power of culture, and refinement.

It came, as a matter of necessity, from such a process of self-forming, that Juliet rarely gave expression to her thoughts. They were rather vague musings, delicious reveries, insubstantial day-dreams, indulged secretly and alone, in the retirement of her own chamber, than uttered to others, brought forward, or discussed. They were a hoarded treasure of silent communings with her own spirit; not spoken, or idly shown.

Indeed, as has been seen, she had few to whom she could have confided them. One other person there was, besides those already cited, —her parents, her cousin Tybalt, the good friar, and her nurse, with whom she held intercourse; and that one was, Rosaline, a niece of Capulet's. But she, though a young a very beautiful girl, was still so

much older than Juliet, that there was less of freedom and intimacy between them than might have been supposed to exist with two such near relations. Besides, they had scarcely a point of sympathy in common: their dispositions, tastes, opinions, feelings, were all singularly dissimilar. Juliet was warm and enthusiastic; Rosaline was cold and sedate. Juliet was impassioned in her language, when she ventured to give utterance to the emotions that stirred within her: Rosaline was grave and measured in speech, and rarely gave words to anything but arguments, and ascertained facts. The one spoke from feeling, as if feeling were too vehement to be suppressed: the other never seemed to give vent to impulse, but to assert from settled conviction. The one alluded to impressions, and glanced at imperfect conceptions: the other stated opinions, and announced the result of mature deliberations. While Juliet's eyes surveyed with ecstacy some effect of light in the landscape, and her lips quivered with the fervour of her silent emotion: Rosaline's head would be bent over the rosary she held in her hand, and her eyes would be fixed on the beads, which her lips would tell over in a pious pomp of undertone. While Juliet feasted her imagination with some harmonious outline, or felicitous blending of tints, Rosaline would descant aloud upon the question whether a man rightly fulfilled his destiny in chipping out morsels of marble, or declaim scornfully against the preposterous notion of a human being dedicating his energies to dabbing patches of colour on to canvass.

Rosaline was so serenely didactic, so solemnly oracular, and evinced such placid faith in her own unerring judgment, that she imposed greatly on those around her; she passed among her own friends for a prodigy; a singularly superior young lady. Capulet stood secretly in much awe of her; in her presence his usual glib volubility, and garrulous ease subsided into a sort of snubbed silence; he seemed to have a fidgetty dread of committing himself before her. He would whisper behind his hand to some one near her, as a sort of deprecatory votive offering to her superiority:—"My dear sir, she is quite a philosopher. I can assure you;—quite one of the illuminati in petticoats; —a very very superior young woman is my fair niece Rosaline, let

me tell you, sir!" Rosaline had announced, in her own sublime style of lofty humility, that it was her intention to forswear love, to abjure wedlock, to vow herself to celibacy; in order that she might the better dedicate her whole soul to her high pursuits,—contemplation of mysteries, reflection on profundities, and meditation on all matters abstruse and recondite.

Tybalt, one day, in his off-hand style, astounded his uncle by rapping out the remark that "it would be no great loss to the bachelor world if she did vow to die unmarried; for that no one would have such an affected young pedant!"

Capulet looked scared; but, casting a furtive glance in the direction of his fair niece, and seeing that she was engaged in silencing somebody with an oration upon her own views touching a mooted theory, he indulged in a little stealthy titter; which, however, was nipped in the bud by her turning her head in his direction; whereupon he rose, fidgeted about, took up a humorous print that lay on a table near, as if that had been the cause of his laugh; and at last, ambled out of the room.

Shortly after, some visitors who had been there, took leave; Tybalt flung away, to join the young county Paris in a walk; and lady Capulet being called out to attend to some household superintendence, the two young ladies were left alone.

Juliet ventured timidly to ask her cousin Rosaline, what had made her take so violent a resolution against love and marriage.

"Not 'violent;'—but decided;" replied she. "I do nothing violently; but I have come to a decision,—a calm decision against them, that nothing can induce me to alter. It is not so much aversion to matrimony that sways me; I have a respect for the holy state, abstractedly;" she continued; "but I have no wish to enter it myself. I should not choose the duties of wife and mother,—duties which I should consider myself called upon to fulfil most scrupulously and conscientiously, were I to accept the title,—I should not choose, I say, these duties to interfere with those higher tasks to which I have devoted my energies."

"Can there be higher?" said the soft voice of Juliet. It was so soft, that perhaps her cousin did not hear the remark: at any rate, Rosaline did not answer it; but went on as if there had been no interruption

"After all, any commonplace, dull-souled, mindless woman can perform the mechanical drudgery in question; but not only should I object to the onerous and incessant calls upon time and thought which the conjugal and maternal offices involve;" she said; "but I seriously repugn the notion of wasting, in the idle process of courting, precious moments that might be so far more advantageously bestowed, both morally and mentally. Do not think, my dear cousin, that I mention the circumstance I am about to tell you, as a vain-glorious boast, or from any motive of display; for if I know myself, I am above such foolish vauntings; but there is a young lord who persecutes me with his attentions, and will not be said nay; and his vexatious suit would teach me the trouble, and noyance, and frivolous waste of time that courtship is, even had I not known it before from the numerous wooers that this poor beauty hath attracted around me, to my infinite perplexity, and to the bringing about of the vow I have taken. The youth I speak of,—I will not tell you his name, Juliet, for his sake, poor fellow!—is well enough, — nay, very well; he is really handsome, and heir to one of the noblest houses in Verona; but so importunately, so abominably in love, that really I should have no time I could call my own, were I to admit his attentions. If he be so exacting, and tormenting, now that he is hopeless, what would he be, you know, my dear, were he a favored lover?"

Juliet seemed to be lost in thought. Seeing she did not answer; after a moment's pause, Rosaline continued:—"He really is pitiably in love, this poor young fellow, and yet I cannot find in my heart to pity him. No; I am convinced that I have done wisely, in coming to the determination to live to myself, to my own exalted views of what is the prerogative of a human soul—free, uncontrolled, unlimited speculation of mind; unshackled by the petty concerns of this earth."

She held forth for some time longer in this strain; but seeing Juliet still wrapt in her own thoughts, soon after took leave. Juliet was indeed pondering upon many things that suggested themselves to her thought, during this late—not conversation, but harangue. It struck her, among other things, that Rosaline seemed to take pride in the fact of this youth's love, not for any delight it afforded her, but for the glory

of having it to reject. As she had looked into her cousin's beautiful face, and heard her descant so coolly upon this passionate lover, she marvelled; she could not but wonder to hear one so lovely proclaim herself so unloving. She wondered that Rosaline could resist the charm of an attachment so devoted; she could scarcely comprehend the remaining unmoved by such fervour of affection as the one described. She felt a strange kind of pity and sympathy for this unknown lover, so hopelessly enamoured. She now, for the first time, asked herself what her own feelings would be, were she to discover that she had inspired such a passion. The idea startled her; and held her for some time pausing, with her cheek leaning upon her hand, her head drooping, and her eyes fixed upon the ground. She was still quite a girl in years, though on the verge of Southern early womanhood; her heart spoke powerfully in its young and ardent feelings; it was pure, fresh, unhackneyed; all the more potent in its impulses, for its very purity. She sat there, deeply musing, motionless as though she had been a statue. Her reverie held her entranced, though without a definite object. She seemed awaiting,—like the clay Pandora, the touch of Prometheus,—the vital fire of Love, which was to make her, from a dreaming child into a sentient, passionate woman.

She was aroused from her abstracted mood, by the return of Tybalt. He began with his usual vehemence, to tell her of some offence he had newly taken, upon some imaginary ground, against some members of the rival family of the Montagues. He endeavoured to explain the nature of the affront, and to make her understand how he naturally felt himself wronged, insulted, aggrieved. But although Juliet, for the sake of her cousin,—to whom she was as fondly attached as if he had been her brother,—had always tried to take an interest in these quarrels of his, yet she could never rightly comprehend the nature of the feuds and jealousies between the rival houses. She sometimes persuaded herself that she shared the rancour, the party feeling that animated all her kindred against the other faction; but in reality, she understood little, and cared even less, about the rivalry that existed between them. She called the Montagues, enemies, because all of her house and name called them so;

but she had not one spark of genuine hatred. She had never even seen any of the family; for the retired life she had led, had afforded no opportunity for meeting them.

She had more than once heard of public contentions, of affrays in the open street, that had taken place between parties of the several houses; but she had not entered into the merits of these contests, save inasmuch, as she concluded that the Montagues were of course in the wrong, and the Capulets of course in the right. She now only made out that Tybalt was enraged against young Romeo, the son of lord Montague, for assuming the right of walking in a certain grove of sycamore that lay to the west of the city, with an air as if he claimed the sole occupancy of the place; and that her cousin was highly indignant, for some unstated cause, against young Benvolio, whom he called "a conceited pragmatist.'

He went on to mutter:—"The fellow holds himself to be best fencer in Verona; when, as all the world knows, and as I hope to prove, one day,—but enough." He started up, bit his lip; then burst out again, with some invective against Mercutio.

"There is something about that fellow that makes my blood boil but to look upon his face. It hath a laughing, careless, insolence of contempt in it, that sends my fingers tingling to my sword-hilt, to let a little of its malapert ruddiness forth. There's a twinkle in his eye, that tells of a sleeve-smiling, even whilst he lifts his cap with most of studious courtesy." His cousin asked some slight question concerning the lord Montague's son.

"Hang him!" was the reply. "Sweet youth, and virtuous gentleman as he is reputed by the wiseacres of our city, I hope to see him hanged some day, or throttled somehow. I shall never feel at rest till the whole tribe of Montagues are got rid of,—cast out from amongst us, —fairly banished from Verona."

Juliet smiled at his testy humour; and to divert him from it, told him that her father had spoken of a masked ball which he intended giving on the occasion of his wedding-day anniversary; having always marked it by a festival of some kind.

Tybalt said something in reply, about letting his friend Paris know, that he might have his mask and domino in readiness ; and added, with a meaning look, which Juliet could not then interpret, that he believed his friend, the county, intended having a private interview with his uncle Capulet before the ball.

The result of this interview was communicated to her afterwards. The evening appointed for the entertainment had arrived ; and just as Juliet was about to enter the ball-room, she thought she heard her mother's voice, in another apartment, enquiring for her. Then the nurse, who was with lady Capulet, came forth to summon her to her mother's presence. Juliet hastened towards her with the words :—

" *How now, who calls?*"

And now to tell the sum of Juliet's life, her love, her death, the Poet's " strength shall help afford."

PASSAGES IN THE PLAYS

(*As Illustrative Notes to Vol. II.*)

IN RELATION TO

FACTS, NAMES, AND SENTIMENTS,

WITH WHICH IT WAS REQUISITE THE TALE SHOULD ACCORD.

TALE VI.

Page 4, line 1. Foot-racing is an ancient Viennese custom, on the first of May.

Page 50, line 31. Her brother Claudio says of her:—

* * * * * "She hath prosperous art
When she will play with reason and discourse,
And well she can persuade."—MEASURE FOR MEASURE, Act i., s. 3.

Page 51, line 26. *Duke.* "What is that Barnardine, who is to be executed in the afternoon?

Provost. A Bohemian born; but here nursed up and bred: one that is a prisoner nine years old."—*Ibid.*, Act iv., s, 2.

Page 54, line 22. *Duke.* "Unfit to live, or die: O, gravel heart!"—*Ibid.*, Act iv., s. 3.

Page 55, line 30. See her vehement language in reply to her brother's sophistical pleading:—

"Sweet sister, let me live:
What sin you do to save a brother's life,
Nature dispenses with the deed so far,
That it becomes a virtue."—*Ibid.*, Act iii., s. 1.

Page 60, line 3. "Have you not heard speak of Mariana, the sister of Frederick, the great soldier, who miscarried at sea?

Isab. I have heard of the lady, and good words went with her name.

Duke. Her should this Angelo have married; was affianced to her by oath, and the nuptial appointed; between which time of the contract, and limit of the solemnity, her brother Frederick was wrecked at sea, having in that perish'd vessel the dowry of his sister."

Ibid., Act iii., s. 1.

Page 67, line 23. Shakespeare, in his large charity and wisdom, has given us this one redeeming particular in the odious character in question. His profound knowledge of humanity, as well as profound sympathy with it, has not suffered him to give us a single instance of unredeemed wickedness; and he has accordingly put a few words into Mrs. Overdone's mouth, which relieve our entire abhorrence. When she is being carried to prison, we find that she owes her arraignment to the heartless, despicable Lucio. She adds:—"His child is a year and a quarter old, come Philip and Jacob: *I have kept it myself;* and see how he goes about to abuse me."—MEASURE FOR MEASURE, Act iii., s. 2.

Page 69, line 7 "Here in the prison, father,
There died this morning of a cruel fever
One Ragozine, a most notorious pirate,
A man of Claudio's years; his beard, and head,
Just of his colour."—*Ibid.*, Act iv., s. 4.

Page 70, line 14. For the ground-work of the Duke's character, see the short scene with friar Thomas, early in the play; from which we learn his habits, and "how he hath ever lov'd the life removed."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 4.

Page 71, line 9. In the second scene of the play, we find that Lucio and the 'two gentlemen,' are Claudio's companions.

Page 76, line 27. *Lucio.* "Is she your cousin?
Isab. Adoptedly; as school-maids change their names,
By vain though apt affection."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 5.

Page 87, line 32. * * * * * * "She is fast my wife,
Save that we do the denunciation lack
Of outward order: this we came not to,
Only for propagation of a dower
Remaining in the coffer of her friends;
From whom we thought it meet to hide our love,
Till time made them for us."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 3.

TALE VII.

Page 96, line 17. 'Bollitura' is a kind of thin drink, or decoction, for sick people

Page 98, line 21. "Signor Baptista may remember me,
Near twenty years ago, in Genoa."—TAMING OF THE SHREW, Act iv., s. 4.

Page 106, line 27. We are told that "Saint Macarius happened one day inadvertently to kill a gnat that was biting him in his cell; reflecting that he had lost the opportunity of suffering that mortification, he hastened from his cell to the marshes of Sceté, which abound with great flies, whose stings pierce even wild boars. There he continued six months, exposed to those ravaging insects; and to such a degree was his whole body

disfigured by them, with sores and swellings, that when he returned, he was only known by his voice." Of St. Simeon Stylites we learn, that "he erected a pillar 6 cubits high, and on it he dwelt four years; on another, 22 cubits high, ten years; and on another, 40 cubits high, built for him by the people, he spent the last twenty years of his life."

Page 108, line 19. There is a singular inconsistency in the feelings of the Italian people towards friars. They reverence their holy calling; but it is reckoned unlucky,—or, as the Scotch would call it, 'uncanny,'—to meet a friar in the streets. They make a particular sign towards him, stealthily, with the fore and middle-finger, called 'jettatura,' which is supposed to avert ill-consequences, from the evil-eye,' or other ominous encounter.

Page 119, line 12. 'Pignoli' are pine kernels; a kind of nut much in favor with Italian boyhood.

Page 119, line 25. 'Miscetta' is Northern Italian for 'puss.'

Page 120, line 8. 'Cedrata' is a drink made from citron; 'Limonata' from lemons; and 'Semata' from lemon seeds.

Page 149, line 22. 'Battuto' is made by laying a stratum of cement, strewn thickly over with marble broken into small pieces beaten hard with iron flats, and polished into a beautiful, smooth, mosaic-looking floor.

Page 182, line 32. When Bianca finally jilts him for Lucentio, Hortensio says:—

> "I will be married to *a wealthy widow*
> Ere three days pass; which hath as long lov'd me,
> As I have lov'd this proud disdainful haggard."
>
> TAMING OF THE SHREW, Act iv., s. 2.

TALE VIII.

Page 190, line 1. Those who remember Göethe's uncandid remarks upon Ophelia's songs, in his Wilhelm Meister, with the prurient deductions he draws from them in estimating her character, will see the gist of Botilda's fleer.

Page 205, line 20. In one of her ravings (HAMLET, Act iv., s. 5.), Ophelia exclaims:—"O, how the *wheel* becomes it! It is the false steward, that stole his master's daughter!" The commentators differ about the significance of the 'wheel' alluded to; some believing it to be the spinning-wheel of the girl whose song Ophelia has just quoted; others affirming it to mean "the burthen of the song," *rota* being the ancient musical term in Latin for this. In the tale, it has been assumed that the 'wheel,' was the instrument of torture, upon which the false steward was racked, in becoming punishment for his crimes.

Page 217, line 30. Another of Ophelia's wandering sentences, in the same scene, is:—"They say, the owl was a baker's daughter."

Page 227, line 1. See the colloquy with Reynaldo, at the commencement of the second act, for this peculiarity of Polonius's. Some of these short scenes, omitted in stage representation, afford subtlest instances of the Poet's mastery in the development of character and manner.

Page 228, line 23. The stratagems of sending Ophelia to Hamlet, and of placing himself, the king, and the queen, where they may witness the interview unseen, with the one of hiding behind the arras to overbear what passes between the prince and his mother in her closet, are both devised by Polonius.

Page 231, line 23. * * * * "we here despatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway;"—HAMLET, Act i., s. 2.

Page 248, line 28. The reader will remember Hamlet's banter of Osric's affected style of speech and pronunciation, in the fifth Act. The word 'impawned' is spelt 'imponed,' in the folio edition. "Why is this imponed, *as you call it?*"

Page 263, line 10. *Lærtes.* "My dread lord,
Your leave and favour to return to France;
From whence, though willingly, I came to Denmark,
To show my duty in your coronation;
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again towards France,
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 2.

TALE IX.

Page 262. line 17 For Audrey's obsequious swain, William, see the scene at the commencement of the fifth Act, in the play of AS YOU LIKE IT.

Page 277, line 19. The duke says to Orlando:—
* * * "the residue of your fortune,
Go to my *cave* and tell me."—AS YOU LIKE IT, Act ii., s. 7.

Page 270, line 7. *Cel.* * * * "know'st thou not, the duke
Hath banish'd me his daughter?

Ros. That he hath not.

Cel. No? hath not? Rosalind lacks then the love
Which teacheth thee that thou and I am one:
Shall we be sunder'd? Shall we part, sweet girl?
No: let my father seek another heir.
Therefore devise with me, how we may fly,
Whither to go, and what to bear with us:

And do not seek to take your change upon you,
To bear your griefs yourself, and leave me out;
For by this heaven, now at our sorrows pale,
Say what thou canst, I'll go along with thee."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 3.

Page 284, line 26. The classical colouring given to the diction of both Rosalind and Celia, by the poet, is striking. It is in exquisite keeping with the tone of the drama; and forms a tasteful and natural characteristic of these two charming heroines. Instances might be multiplied, to a remarkable extent, of the mythological allusions that occur in their speeches. To cite one of the first that occurs,—where Celia asks her cousin what she shall call her in her man's disguise, Rosalind replies:—

"I'll have no worse a name than Jove's own page,
And therefore look you call me Ganymede."

AS YOU LIKE IT, Act i., s. 3.

Page 286, line 12. We hear of Rosalind and Celia in the first scene, "never two ladies loved as they do;" and afterwards; "their loves are dearer than the natural bond of sisters."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 2.

Page 289, line 16. *Ros.* "But, cousin, what if we assay'd to steal
The clownish fool out of your father's court?
Would he not be a comfort to our travel?

Cel. He'll go along o'er the wide world with me,
Leave me alone to woo him."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 3.

Page 290, line 21. The duke addresses Amiens thus:—"good *cousin*, sing."
Ibid., Act ii., s. 7.

Page 290, line 28. Duke Frederick says to Orlando, youngest son of Sir Roland de Bois:—
"The world esteem'd thy father honourable,
But I did find him still mine enemy."

And Rosalind says:—

"My father lov'd Sir Rowland as his soul,
And all the world was of my father's mind."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 2.

Page 298, line 5. "There's no news at the court, sir, but the old news; that is, the old duke is banished by his younger brother, the new duke; and three or four loving lords have put themselves into voluntary exile with him, whose lands and revenues enrich the new duke; therefore he gives them good leave to wander."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 1.

Page 301, line 28. Le Beau says to Orlando, when he announces him to Duke Frederick's displeasure against him:—

* * * * "Sir, fare you well!
Hereafter in a better world than this,
I shall desire more love and knowledge of you."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 2.

Page 319, line 12. That Celia is the shorter of the two lady-cousins, Shakespeare has noted in more than one passage of the play; and Rosalind herself says:—

"Because that I am more than common tall."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 3.

Page 323, line 8. "Merelles, or as it was formerly called in England, nine men's morris and also five-penny morris, is a game of some antiquity. Cotgrave describes it as a boyish game, and says it was played here commonly with stones, but in France with pawns, or men made on purpose, and they were termed merelles; hence the pastime itself received that denomination."—STRUTT'S SPORTS AND PASTIMES.

TALE X.

Page 355, line 1. "Even or odd, of all days in the year,
Come *Lammas-Eve* at night, shall she be fourteen."

ROMEO AND JULIET, Act i., s. 3

Page 359, line 8. 'Polenta' is a boiled mash; sometimes made of chesnut-flour, but mostly of maize. 'Su di sopra' is a common Italian idiom for upstairs.

Page 360. line 8. We learn lady Capulet's Christian name, from her fussy lord's words, where he is pottering about, giving orders for hastening the wedding-feast. Among other injunctions, he says:—

"Look to the bak'd meats, good *Angelica;*
Spare not for cost."—*Ibid.*, Act iv., s. 4.

Page 367, line 8. From several passages in the play we trace that Capulet is an elderly man. That his wife must be considerably his junior, we find from what she says to her daughter, just after we have learned that Juliet is scarcely fourteen:—

* * * * * "by my count,
I was your mother, much upon these years
That you are a maid."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 4.

Page 371, line 1. At the period when the Veronese date the events of Romeo and Juliet's history, the Scaligers ruled over Verona; and Shakespeare has given the prince the name of Escalus.

Page 370, line 29. Capulet's early gallantries may be inferred from his gossiping talk with a kinsman at the commencement of the masquerade scene; and afterwards, from those few words between him and lady Capulet,—which also furnish hints for her jealousy, as wrought out in the tale:—

Cap. * * * * "What! I have watch'd ere now
All night for lesser cause, and ne'er been sick.
La. Can. Ay, you have been a mouse-hunt in your time;
But I will watch you from such watching now.
Cap. A jealous-hood, a jealous-hood!"

Ibid., Act iv, s. 4.

Page 378, line 15. *La Cap.* "Tybalt, my cousin! *O my brother's child!*"
Ibid., Act iii., s. 1.

Page 380, line 22. A custom that obtains in Italy to this very day.

Page 387. line 1. See the nurse's speech of reminiscence, in the third scene of the play.

Page 389, line 24. We have Tybalts's fencing-school proficiency, together with his fiery pride of spirit, hit off in Mercutio's humorous description:—"The very butcher of a silk button, a duellist, a duellist; a gentleman of the very house,—of the first and second cause: Ah, the immortal passado! the punto reverso!"

Page 392, line 9. They, to whom lady Capulet's conduct may appear over-coloured in the tale, are referred to the passage in the play, where she betrays her vindictive Italian nature by the deliberate proposal of despatching the "villain, Romeo," who has killed her nephew Tybalt:—

"We will have vengeance for it, fear thou not:
Then weep no more. I'll send to one in Mantua,—
Where that same banish'd runagate doth live,—
That shall bestow on him so sure a draught,
That he shall soon keep Tybalt company.
* * * * * * * *
Find thou the means, and I'll find such a man."
ROMEO AND JULIET, Act iii., s. 5.

Page 394, last line. 'Prender chiesa' is a common idiom for taking sanctuary.

Page 412, line 28. For a description of 'pazienzi,' see Tale VII., p. 137.

Page 419, line 9. "Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,
By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets;"—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 1.

Page 419, line 17. Into the mouth of Capulet himself is put this testimony to the fair reputation of Romeo,—heir of the rival house:—

"He bears him like a portly gentleman;
And, to say truth, Verona brags of him,
To be a virtuous and well-govern'd youth."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 5.

Page 419, line 27. Romeo speaks thus of Mercutio:—
"This gentleman, *the prince's near ally*,
My very friend, hath got his mortal hurt
In my behalf."

And afterwards, Benvolio, addressing the prince, says:—

"There lies the man, slain by young Romeo,
That slew *thy kinsman*, brave Mercutio."—*Ibid.*, Act iii., s. 1.

Page 431. line 29. Among the written list of Capulet's friends, invited to his entertainment, occurs:—"the lady widow of Vitruvio."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 2.

Page 458, line 4. Juliet's observant delight in Nature's beauties, may be inferred from one line alone that she utters:—

"It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear:
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree."—*Ibid.*, Act iii., s. 5.

Page 459, line 33. In the list before alluded to, of Capulet's invited guests, her name thus appears:—My fair *niece*, Rosaline." Her identity with Romeo's first love is to be traced from Benvolio's saying to him, immediately after it is read aloud:—

"At this same ancient feast of Capulet's
Sups the fair Rosaline, whom thou so lov'st."

The hints for her character are taken from what we hear of her from Romeo himself, from friar Laurence, and from Mercutio; the last of whom calls her "that same pale-hearted wench, that Rosaline."

ROMEO AND JULIET, Act ii., s. 4.

Page 460, last line. "She hath forsworn to love; and, in that vow,
Do I live dead, that live to tell it now."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 1.

Page 461, last line. That Juliet has never beheld Romeo previously to the commencement of the play, the poet has conveyed to us in the passage:—

Jul. "What's he, that follows there, that would not dance?

Nurse. I know not.

Jul. Go, ask his name:—if he be married,
My grave is like to be my wedding-bed.

Nurse. His name is Romeo, and a Montague;
The only son of your great enemy.

Jul. My only love sprung from my only hate!
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!"—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 5.

Page 464, line 10. See those exquisite lines of Benvolio's in reply to his friend's mother, Lady Montague:—

"Madam, an hour before the worshipp'd sun,
Peer'd forth the golden window of the east,
A troubled mind drave me to walk abroad:
Where,—underneath *the grove of sycamore,*
That westward rooteth from the city's side,—
So early walking did I see your son:
Towards him I made; but he was 'ware of me,
And stole into the covert of the wood."—*Ibid.*, Act i., s. 1.

Page 464, line 19. For Benvolio's repute in fence, see Mercutio's banter, at the commencement of the third act of the play.

END OF PART II.